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The Nongraded School.

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Most of the 20 articles in this collection are by education professors and school principals from various sections of the U.S. Included are an editorial on the nongraded school; an overview of definitions, history, and research on nongraded schools; some preliminary findings of a 1967 NEA survey of the principalship; suggested guidelines for planning, establishing, and maintaining a nongraded school; discussion of curriculum for nongraded schools; discussion of the responsibilities of teachers in nongraded schools for home-school communication; suggestions for research analysis and planning; report of a national survey of practices in nongraded elementary schools; reviews of three books on nongraded schools; suggestions for the preservice and inservice education of principals and teachers for nongraded schools; description of a program in which reading level is the criterion for classroom assignment; program description of a nongraded middle school; and 22 questions suggested for study and discussion of the nongraded school idea. Other articles are "Jump on the Nongraded Bandwagon? Stop! Wait!"; "Profile of the Nongraded Child"; "The Report Card on a Nongraded School"; "Travels with Apache: A Tour of Nongraded Schools" (the typical, the atypical, and the ideal); "Physical Facilities for Nongraded Schools"; and "From Kindergarten to What?" (JS)

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Editorial

For a decade, the nongraded school has been a much discussed educational innovation, particularly at the elementary school level. But the extent of its implementation is a matter of disagreement. Some current discourse would suggest that nongraded schools are scattered rather profusely across the country and that there are few communities without one. Depth studies suggest, on the other hand, that there has been more tampering with labels than with actual practices and that relatively few "nongraded" schools have taken advantage of nongraded concepts to redesign curriculum, instruction, and evaluation.

My own view, based largely on first-hand observation and a staggering load of correspondence about nongrading, is that there are, indeed, precious few nongraded schools—nongraded in the sense of conforming to the conceptual model proposed by my colleague, Robert Anderson, in his excellent lead article, or to that set forth by Daniel Purdom in his recent dissertation ("A Conceptual Model of the Ungraded School," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles). Rather, the concepts guiding the nongraded school as a functioning entity have been absorbed, to considerable degree, into the larger educational enterprise and its accompanying rhetoric. This is both good and bad.

It is good to the extent that nongrading is serving as a positive force in our current drive toward schools that concern themselves with individual human beings and the cultivation of their talents. Such concern is an extension of the humanistic thrust that was carried from Europe to the United States in the nineteenth century and given fresh interpretation here. Most educators agree that provision for individuality and individual differences in the form of continuous progress, diversified curricula, use of many materials rather than a single textbook, diagnosis in teaching, and so on is good educational practice whether in graded or nongraded schools. Some of us in this larger group believe such practice, conducted within a flexible, open envelope of school organization, *is* nongrading. Definitions aside, however, to the extent that schooling is becoming more humane and individualized, under whatever labels, so much the better.

But there is also the foggy possibility that the concepts guiding nongrading are becoming part of the rambling rhetoric, the cant of current educational orthodoxy. This would be a pity because the concepts are powerful, and new, powerful concepts are not easy to come by. If our educational enterprise has merely absorbed these and made them slogans like others that come and go—"teach the whole child," "not subjects, but children," "structure of the disciplines," and more—then the monster is become more monstrous and more resistant to change. Even more potent ideas are needed to shake it loose from established ways.

It is often said that any establishment, threatened by heresy, seeks first to crush and then, failing this, to absorb the leaders of dissent. This is a natural, virtually subconscious process of short-term survival. But if it is absorption without fundamental adaptation to changing needs and conditions, the process is self-defeating. The long-term principles of evolution are against this "survival by absorption."

With respect to nongrading—and, for that matter, several other potentially significant innovations of the past decade—I fear that American education is now absorbing the concepts without effecting the changes implied by them. The much heralded revolution in American education is being in large part blunted on the classroom door. There are several reasons for this.

First, only a small segment of any population group is boldly innovative. This is no less true in education than in any other field. Few of us dare to go down to the sea in ships. We prefer to go down to Walden pond in duck punts. And, once there, we prefer not to rock the boat for fear of becoming seasick.

A basic biochemical principle is that any fundamental change introduced at some point in an organism changes the character of the whole organism. Nongrading in concept represents such a change; it threatens the stability of the educational organism. Not surprisingly, then, timid souls prefer the nomenclature rather than the reality of nongrading.

Second, the concepts of nongrading are exasperatingly difficult to implement. Like the concepts of progressive education, they are pervasive and allow for alternative specifics in implementation. They cannot simply be adopted, like textbooks, without changing anything else.

Third, perhaps because of my first and second points, there are few models of nongrading—conceptual, simulated, or real. Educators have gone avisiting but, too often, have seen schools only labelled nongraded. They might have spent their time more profitably in building their own models from such concepts as are available.

We must not ignore the possibility, either, that the movement's leaders are grown somewhat tired and complacent, that they are no longer hungry heretics. Necessarily in some rapport with the educational enterprise they sought to change, they may now be partially and deceptively absorbed by it. Initially bruised and wounded in their attack on the more solidified part of this enterprise, they now speak in its best forums, write in its best journals, dine in its best mansions.

American education is not nearly as good as it should and could be. The revolution—if there has been one at all—has been in the lofty stratosphere of ideas, not on the ground where the schools and children are. This is no time for complacency, for thinking that the job is done. Nongrading has given a fresh twist and a fresh thrust to some respectable ideas of relatively long standing. But much of the job of implementation remains. For this, as already stated, we need models—conceptual, simulated, and real models in the form of experimental schools—and comprehensive strategies for change that embrace large segments of the total enterprise.

We need innovations, too—constructs that bespeak and define new patterns of schooling, practices not yet envisioned. Perhaps, as Robert Anderson suggests, nongrading is more non-school than school, more negative than affirmative. Whether self-renewal is to come from new twists to nongrading or from entirely new thrusts in education—and we need both—let the new generation of heretics arise and show the way.

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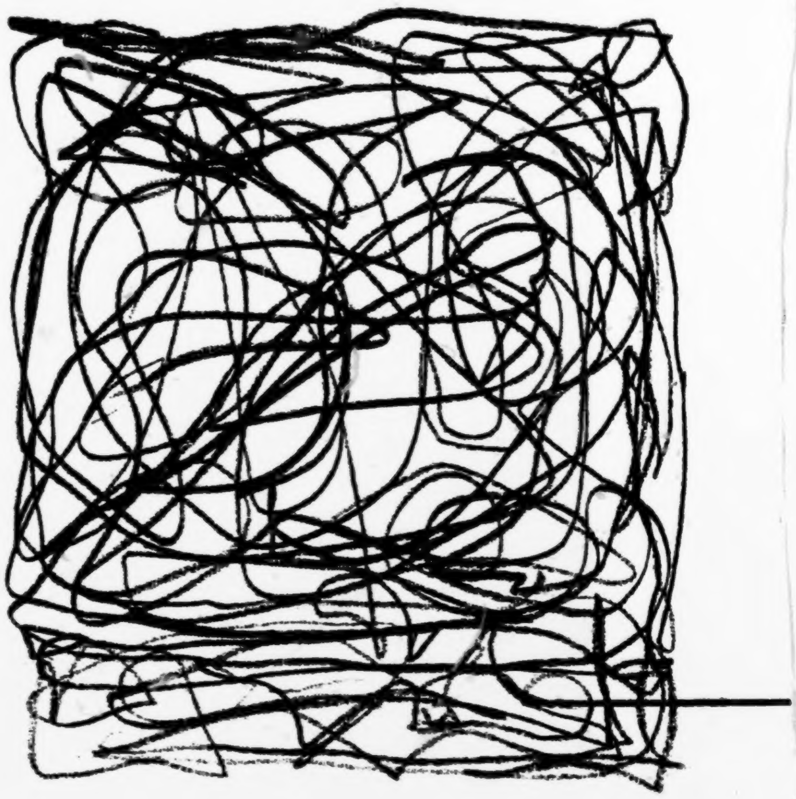

ROBERT H. ANDERSON

FEW topics on the current scene are of greater interest to elementary school teachers and administrators than the nongraded school. The subject of a rapidly expanding literature, nongradedness has probably received more attention over the past decade in national, state, and regional meetings than any other aspect of school organization, and DESP's mailbox is constantly full of inquiries about it. Yet, for all the publicity it has received, nongradedness apparently remains a somewhat nebulous, even confusing, concept. It is therefore both timely and fortunate that DESP has reserved two issues of *The National Elementary Principal* for a thorough examination of the nongraded plan.

Nongradedness Defined

One reason for the uncertainty that surrounds the concept of nongradedness is that its vocabulary is both imprecise in meaning and negativistic in tone. "Nongradedness" is a clumsy and unsuitable term, since it refers primarily to what it is *not* rather than to what it *is*. Furthermore, the label "nongraded" has often been applied to programs which have made only very limited departures from conventional gradedness (for example, only the reading program has been rendered more flexible), or are merely a version of homogeneous grouping or even departmentalization. Often, too, visitors to so-called nongraded classes discover that terms such as "first grade" and "third grade" are still in common use and pupils may still be confronted by conventional A-B-C-D-F report cards, as well as the administrative machinery of promotion and nonpromotion. In the absence of agreement concerning its meaning, and because of the carelessness with which it is used, "nongradedness" is therefore a term for which the profession desperately needs alternatives. For the moment, however, we must struggle along with it as best we can.

Nongradedness refers to at least two dimensions of the school and its atmosphere: 1) the philosophy (or, if you will, the value system) that guides the behavior of the school staff toward the pupils, and 2) the administrative-organizational machinery and procedures whereby the life of the pupils and teachers is regulated and facilitated. It is, in short, both an operational mechanism and a theoretical proposition. It is not a new staffing pattern, as is team teaching. It is not a technological innovation, as is educational television. It is not, as such, a component of the curriculum reform movement, though it may very well be the chief inspiration behind curriculum reform. Rather, it is a concept of what is right and a plan for implementation of that concept.

Many definitions have been offered, and for the

the nongraded school

AN OVERVIEW

most part they differ in the elegance and the comprehensiveness with which their authors have stated them, rather than in conceptual meaning. Without exception, the emphasis is upon individualizing instruction and upon developing each individual up to his full potential for physical, social, intellectual, and civic accomplishment. Without exception, too, there is reference to the fact that provision should be made for both differentiated *rates* of pupil progress and variations in the *kinds of programs* offered to this child and that. Many, though not all, refer to the need for more suitable forms of evaluating and reporting pupil progress, and most make some reference to the various *means* for individualizing instruction via pupil group, independent study, and other procedural arrangements. The titles of nongraded programs vary, many using phrases like "Continuous Progress Plan" or "Continuous Growth Plan," but others simply referring to the name of the school or city in a phrase such as "The Middletown Project."

Although most publications on nongradedness and an overwhelming number of pilot programs are at the early elementary level, the movement is in fact inclusive of all school levels from nursery schools through the university. The writings in this field are primarily in the form of magazine articles and pamphlets published by local school systems, although there are now a number of complete volumes dedicated to this topic. Several of those most recently published are in effect case histories of certain specific programs.

John I. Goodlad, in one of the three major volumes[1] produced by the NEA Project on Instruction, points out that there are several different models of school organization, or variants thereof, to be found in American schools today. One of these is the graded pattern which, we fervently hope, is rapidly disappearing from the American scene. Gradedness grows out of an assumption that schools are intended to cover and to inculcate in the pupils a specific body of subject matter which is carefully laid out in the successive grades and closely identified with those grades. In this model, the fact that children differ from each other is viewed primarily as an explanation for the differences in children's actual performances, and not as a basis for planning the program. Pupils who make slow progress are adjusted to the system by means chiefly of nonpromotion.

In the learner-centered, nongraded model which Goodlad then describes, the following assumptions are made:

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School function: Schools are learner-centered —designed to develop the learner as an individual and as a member of society.

Means of fulfilling function: Focus should be on ways of knowing and thinking. Emphasis is on the individual.

Organizational structure: Graded structure is either ignored as meaningless or replaced with a nongraded plan. Grouping patterns are flexible. Individual differences tend to be accounted for through intraclass provisions rather than interclass provisions.

Individual differences: Differences in many aspects of development are recognized and used in planning highly individualized programs.

Pupil progress: Provision is made for both differentiated rates of progress and variations in kinds of program, according to individual needs and abilities.

Nongradedness should not be confused with departmentalization, self-contained classrooms, or cooperative teaching plans. The latter three arrangements represent the major alternatives in horizontal school organization (i.e., the way the children and staff are deployed within the school at any given point in time), whereas gradedness and nongradedness are two major alternatives in vertical school organization (i.e., the way the progress of children is regulated over a period of years). Every school must commit itself to both a vertical and a horizontal plan, and therefore if one believes in nongradedness he can, if he chooses, combine it with team teaching or with the self-contained classroom pattern, or (as in the Dual Progress Plan) with a form of departmentalization.

There is increasing reason to believe, as I do strongly, that nongradedness is both easier to develop and more effective in practice in schools that abandon the self-contained classroom arrangement in favor of its horizontal alternatives, especially cooperative teaching. It appears to be considerably more difficult for any one teacher by himself to carry on an appropriately flexible program for his class than it is for a group of teachers who share a larger number of pupils. However, having made this strategic suggestion let us return to our attempt at definition of a nongraded program.

In a full-fledged nongraded program, all of the following statements would be justified:

1. Suitable provision is being made, in all aspects of the curriculum, for each unique child.
    a. This implies flexible grouping and subgrouping of pupils.
    b. It implies an adaptable, flexible curriculum.
    c. It implies a great range of materials and instructional approaches.
2. The successive learning experiences of each boy and girl will be, to the greatest possible extent, pertinent and appropriate to his needs at that moment. Easier said than done, of course, but this—*not* teacher convenience or administrative convenience—is the creed that guides our professional decisions!
3. Each child is constantly under just the right amount of pressure—not too much, as in the graded school for slow learners, nor too little, as in the graded school for talented learners. Again, easier said than done—but we strive to do it!
4. Success, with appropriate rewards, is assured for all kinds of learners so long as they attend to their tasks with reasonable diligence and effort. Such success spurs the child to a conviction of his own worth, and to further achievement.
    a. Failure and frustration occasionally? Yes, but not nearly as much as faces the below-average child in the graded school!
    b. Over-confidence and complacence occasionally? If so, the system isn't working right.
5. Absent are grade labels (1st grade, 6th grade, etc.) and the related machinery of promotion-and-failure.
6. There is a reporting system consistent with the philosophy that says each child is a unique and precious individual. Teachers abolish the ridiculous and cynical system of A-B-C-D-F report cards.
7. There is more sophisticated curriculum planning, evaluation, and record-keeping on the part of teachers than one finds in schools still loyal to graded practices.

Admittedly an element of propaganda seems to color the foregoing statements, but it seems reasonable to link some of the hoped-for qualities of the school atmosphere with the mechanism itself so long as our intent is to define the idea at its best.

One further dimension of the nongraded concept requires explanation before we proceed to a discussion of nongradedness in practice. One of the characteristics of the graded school, especially in this century in urban schools, has been the separation of children into classes by age. Granted that there is nonetheless a spread of two or more years within each class because some children progress more rapidly (for example, via double-promotion) or more slowly (via nonpromotion), the typical graded class is composed mostly of children who are approximately the same age.

In a nongraded school, it is possible to continue this practice although there is increasing reason to believe that heterogeneous, multi-aged class groups may be preferable. It is argued that children require regular social and intellectual contacts, not only with other pupils of like mind, talent, and experience, but also with pupils of differing backgrounds and predispositions. This implies that a nongraded class (or, preferably, team) of children spanning several years would be preferable to a class or team of youngsters all about the same age. Deliberate heterogeneity, therefore, is recommended as the broad criterion for establishing pupil groups. Sub-groups within the total pupil membership, for example a reading group, may of course be homogeneous.

Nongradedness: A Recent History

Nongradedness is by no means a new idea in American education. Even before 1900 the rigidity and the psychological invalidity of the graded school were under attack from various educators here and abroad, and numerous efforts were made to introduce more humane and appropriate practices into the schools. It is possible to trace a steady, though distressingly slow, erosion of the literally graded school throughout the first half of the 20th century, with such devices as "social promotion" or equivalent practices blunting the worst features of gradedness even though some of its outward forms remained. More recently, the profession's protests against gradedness have increased to the point where Francis Keppel, in 1966, proclaimed nongradedness to be the fastest-moving innovation on the elementary school scene.

At the same time, Keppel and others took note of the somewhat sorry state of the research and literature, and the need to link nongradedness with other reforms such as curriculum revision, the reorganization and retraining of personnel, and the like.

At the present time, indications from the federal government and from NEA and other sources suggest that about one school system in every four is known to be engaged in a serious effort to develop nongraded practices in one or more schools. Probably an even larger number of schools have been moving without fanfare in the direction away from gradedness, and it is interesting to speculate upon the percentage of classrooms in America within which there is not yet any appreciable sign of rigid and unrelenting gradedness giving way. Let us hope that this percentage is small indeed!

We have, then, at least four arrangements in American elementary schools today: 1) uncompromising gradedness; 2) nominal but eroding gradedness (perhaps this is the prevailing arrangement); 3) nominal nongradedness, but within which one finds disappointing evidence of gradedness still in the atmosphere; and 4) nongradedness which is, in large measure, faithful to the definition offered in the preceding section. Though the latter group may at present be small, our hope is that this will soon constitute the majority.

Research on Nongradedness

Partly because the concept itself is difficult to define and is subject to various interpretations, partly because the "educational research community" (to use Keppel's phrase) has not yet developed appropriate research technology, and partly because excellent examples of nongradedness are all too few, there is as yet very little research evidence on which the profession can base its decisions. Further difficulty results from the tendency of researchers to rely heavily upon inappropriate research designs. Goodlad[2] has discussed this problem in some detail, along with commentary on specific studies published up to 1962. Unfortunately, most of the studies published since that date are marred by the same design problems, and it may be some years before more appropriate research studies become available.

A common problem in research using the "control-group-vs.-experimental-group" design is that the researchers fail to indicate the specific, functional ways in which the two groups actually differ from each other. Presumably, the control (graded) group is being treated in ways that differ significantly from the definition of nongradedness as applied to the experimental group. Presumably, too, the experimental group *is* being treated according to the definition. However, one reads many research reports in vain for this type of information. Sometimes, in fact, one discovers information that tends to deny the project's validity.

A case in point is an article published in 1965 regarding a project in Los Angeles County.[3] In the article, there is no description of the ungraded primary organization reportedly being used in twenty schools. Within the text, however, there are comments from which the reader can deduce that the so-called ungraded plan was mostly a system of homogeneous grouping. Several other comments suggest that the ungraded plan was not given sufficient administrative support (for example, in instructional materials, or curriculum work). There is, further, no reference to differential procedures for inducting the primary pupils into 4th grade. The reader is therefore left to wonder whether there were any real differences, either operational or psychological.

Virtually the same question arises in connection with a study reported by Williams.[4] Although information is furnished to show certain administrative differences between the experimental and control groups (for example, use of grade labels and nonpromotion policy), there are statements which suggest that teachers in the so-called graded schools in fact made virtually the same adjustments to the individual differences in their classes as, supposedly (though no evidence is furnished), did the teachers of the so-called nongraded schools. A fascinating reference is made to the fact that the nongraded classes averaged 45 pupils per teacher, whereas the graded classes averaged 27! It seems doubtful that a better understanding of nongradedness can be gained by studies of this sort, whatever their conclusions.

A different sort of problem arises in connection with a 1966 report from Naperville, Illinois.[5] The article describes the difficulties encountered when the parents of four boys, all capable of completing the primary unit in two years, preferred that they not be accelerated (as were 25 others), and therefore "withdrew" their sons from the program. Apparently, too, there is relatively rigid graded structure (as perhaps in the Los Angeles County program) from 4th through 12th grades, and no opportunity within the primary school program for the brighter youngsters to engage in 4th grade-level work. One suspects that the limitations under which the program operates are both self-imposed and artificial.

David Lewin[6] makes the altogether reasonable plea that educators should report the weaknesses as well as the strengths of nongradedness if and when they appear. He then proceeds to examine what he as a supervisor in New York City perceives as problems: better teachers, supported by assistants, are needed; available materials and techniques for individualizing instruction are inadequate; nongrading requires heavy reliance on programed material; costs (for example, in guidance services) are greater; teachers need more conference and planning time; new systems of reporting progress must be developed; testing programs must be revised; administrators must work harder. While his concluding statement that perhaps the goal of greater individualization may also be achievable in graded classes is not supported by argument, Lewin has contributed a great deal by revealing the tough problems that exist in many of our schools. Obviously, as he and many of the other authors are saying, excellent education is not just a question of overhauling our organizational machinery.

In fact, if research and experience tell us anything, it is that the basic problems in improving instruction can be resolved only by a "package approach" in which nongradedness is merely one major component. To quote Calvin Gross: "Nongradedness takes its place among the other promising components of what I like to call 'the innovative package'; team teaching, flexible space, and hierarchies of teaching personnel backed up by mechanical and electronic instructional systems and devices. This mosaic of mutually reinforcing concepts and arrangements has demonstrated greater potential potency for individualizing instruction than any other design conceived so far."[7]

*Further Comments and Reactions**

Several writers have listed reasons why some observers do not consider the nongraded school as desirable. Alleged weaknesses are shown in the left hand column. In the right hand column, I offer my comment in response:

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* This section is adapted from pp. 61-63 of Robert H. Anderson, *Teaching in a World of Change*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.) 1966.

ALLEGATION	COMMENT
1. Nongradedness leads to soft pedagogy; it lacks fixed standards and requirements.	**1.** This is probably true in the early stages, but as we grow more skilled in curriculum development, appropriate standards for each type of child are likely to emerge. Nongradedness may, indeed, lead us *away* from soft pedagogy by enabling all youngsters to master what they study.
2. It places an impossible burden on the teacher.	**2.** Quite true, especially if we persist in having self-contained classrooms! The burden will lift as we find ways of sharing teaching responsibilities.
3. It replaces grade requirements by reading levels.	**3.** Only in the primitive stages and where nongradedness is not well understood.
4. It results in a lack of information on pupil progress to parents.	**4.** Only when the teachers are lazy, foolish, or incompetent in their reporting.
5. It is difficult to put into practice, because teachers are inadequately and insufficiently prepared.	**5.** True. Therefore, let's start a revolution in teacher education!
6. It does not have minimal standards for all children.	**6.** It is better to have standards for *each child*, is it not?
7. Its curriculum sequence tends to lack specificity and order.	**7.** Again, if true it may be just as well! What we need, it must be admitted, is a far more adequate curriculum. The graded curriculum is scarcely the ideal.
8. It is only an improved means to an unimproved end.	**8.** This sounds like double-talk, but if the end is individual fulfillment then nongradedness is a better way to get there.
9. It does not guarantee that improved teaching will result.	**9.** No organization provides such a guarantee. To improve teaching is a very difficult task.
10. It suffers from widespread use and even abuse of the term "nongraded."	**10.** Amen!
11. There is some difficulty in aligning graded with nongraded schools (for example, a primary unit and a graded intermediate program).	**11.** This is true only if the graded unit continues to deal with youngsters in an inappropriate way. And even so, it is no problem for the children; the annoyance is only to the grade-minded teachers.
12. Teachers and parents are so conditioned to the graded structure that they continue "grade-mindedness."	**12.** Yes, but over time this is a disease that can be cured.
13. Extensive records must be kept for each child.	**13.** Some teachers may regard this as a disadvantage but they are wrong!
14. Planning new methods of reporting to parents demands much time and work from the already heavily burdened faculty.	**14.** Very true. Administration must make better provision for supporting services (for example, substitute teacher help) and for retraining teachers in the technology of reporting.

As one considers the complaints that are raised against nongraded plans, he notes that often the critic displays an ingenuous faith in organizational structure as panacea. Would that it were so easy! If all it took to modernize and improve school offerings was an edict to abolish the graded plan, we could all have been in Educational Heaven long ago!

But organizational reform is only a part of the job that must be done. Given the will, we could do it easily and quickly. Then at last we could turn our energies to the really crucial tasks of reform, namely the renovation and redevelopment of curriculum. Judging by their relative detachment from the school reorganization movement thus far, the curriculum people themselves seem not yet to have appreciated this fact; and it may be that nongradedness will ultimately be appreciated because of the curriculum work that it forced educators to do.

What, Then, Should We Do?

In this introductory article I have tried to show that nongradedness is not merely an organizational gimmick but rather a framework within which educators try to express and accomplish what they consider essential to each child's development. I have acknowledged that the idea is as yet underdeveloped, and have endorsed the notion that it offers greatest promise when developed in conjunction with such arrangements as team teaching, multi-age pupil grouping, and technological innovations. Note also that extensive curriculum work and teacher education activities must both precede and accompany nongradedness, along with such important work as the revision of evaluation and reporting procedures.[8] In short, if the idea of nongradedness is to flourish as it deserves, and if children are indeed to be served according to our profession's earnest intentions, our schools and teacher training institutions must literally overhaul themselves. Are we prepared to go this far?

Nongraded Schools—Some Findings

The nongraded type of organization is more likely to be found in and be approved for the primary grades than for the upper grades. This is a preliminary finding of the Department's 1966-67 survey of the principalship which is now being processed for publication in 1968.

Of all principals reporting (both teaching and supervising), the nongraded plan was being used by them at various school levels as follows: first year, 11.2%; second year, 10.7%; third year, 9.6%; fourth year, 3.6%; fifth year, 3.1%; and sixth year, 3.3%.

At a later point in the questionnaire, principals were asked to report on whether or not they had used the nongraded plan and to indicate their evaluation of the plan. Seven in 10 had *not* used nongrading in the primary grades; 8 in 10 had *not* used the plan in the upper grades.

Of those using the plan in the *primary* grades, 55.4% rated it as very valuable; 5.6% as of no value; and 39.1% were not sure of its value.

Of those with experience with the nongraded organization in the *upper* grades, 35.6% rated it as very valuable; 9.0% as of no value; and 55.3% were not sure of its value.

Footnotes

1. Goodlad, John I. *Planning and Organizing for Teaching.* National Education Association, Project on the Instructional Program of the Public Schools. Washington, D. C.: the Association, 1963. pp. 54-57, 65-68.
2. See Goodlad, John I., and Anderson, Robert H. *The Nongraded Elementary School.* Revised edition. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963. pp. 213-19.
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THE NONGRADED SCHOOL

PLANNING FOR IT
ESTABLISHING IT
MAINTAINING IT

EVELYN M. CARSWELL

NONGRADEDNESS is a concept pertaining to individual differences. It is a philosophical outlook. Unless one accepts this and continues to explore its implications in depth, all tools and techniques of implementation will be relatively fruitless. Nongradedness is a way of looking at the learning process—a door to open other doors.[1]

A decade of practical experience in nongraded primary, and administration of a predesigned nongraded program and facility, obligate me to reiterate the need to first accept nongradedness as a value system, as Robert Anderson has named it in the overview article for this issue.[2] Receptivity to philosophy *must* precede planning and establishing any changes.

Of the three phases to be discussed in this article—planning, establishing, and maintaining—

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the most important is the planning phase. The steps under planning are carefully elucidated and should be followed as completely as possible. Suggestions under establishing and maintaining are important but are much more flexible and individualized according to school, personnel, and community.

Graphically speaking, planning, establishing, and maintaining a nongraded school looks something like the illustration below. Some "flower pots" will be short and squatty; others, tall and slender; still others, high and wide.

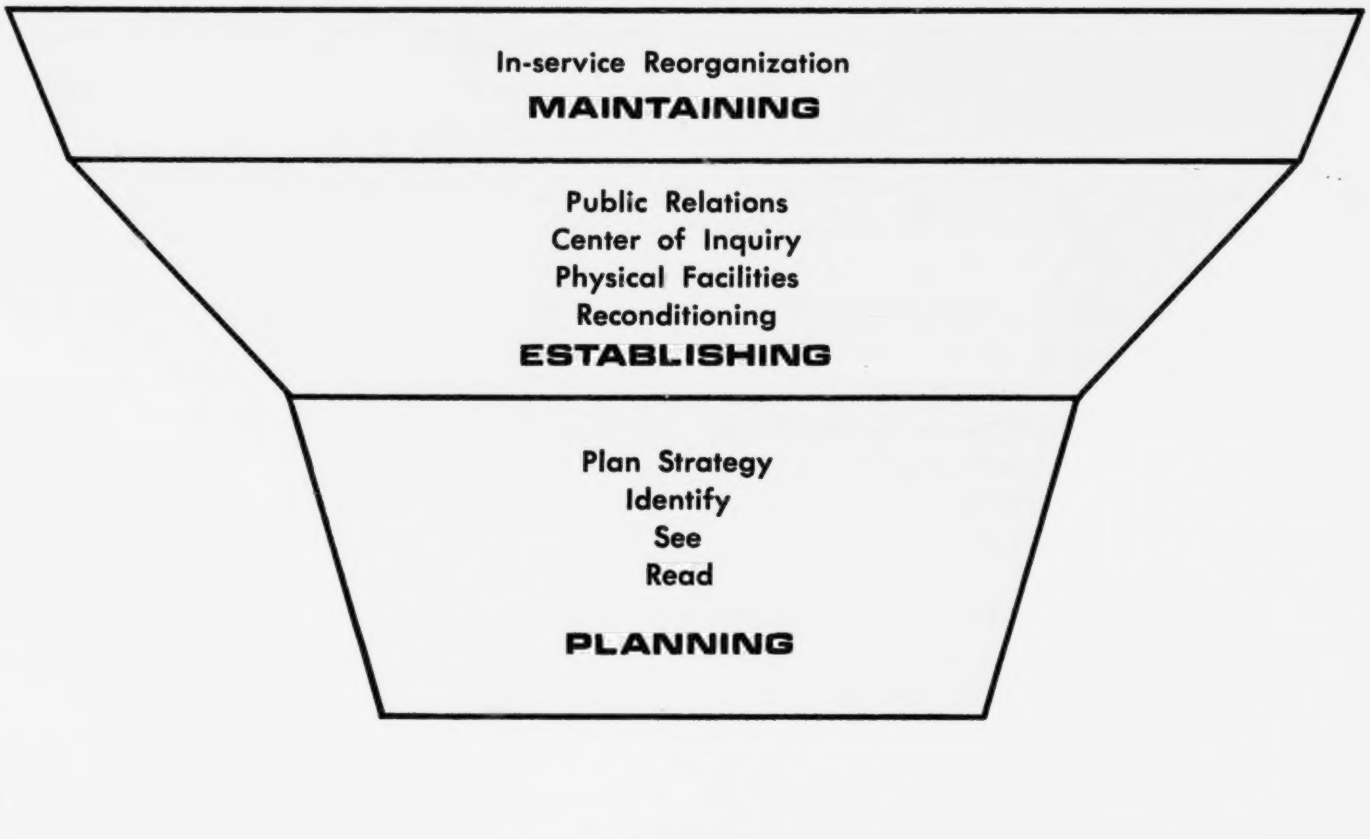
Planning for a Nongraded School

1. *Read for philosophical orientation.* Nongradedness is a philosophical viewpoint. Therefore, to become steeped in this "theoretical proposition," [3] one should read as many resources as possible. Top priority should be given to Goodlad and Anderson's classic, *The Nongraded Elementary School.*[4] Reading from a wide variety of materials enables the reader to adapt and prepare his own rationale of nongradedness.

Read also on strategies for implementing change. The National Education Association recognized this important area and made provisions for a Project on Instruction. This project produced four books: *Schools for the Sixties,*[5] *Deciding What To Teach,*[6] *Education in a Changing Society,*[7] and *Planning and Organizing for Teaching.*[8] Its successor, the Center for the Study of Instruction, continued by publishing a book called *Rational Planning in Curriculum and Instruction,*[9] a volume of timely articles that offer a spectrum of appropriate consideration.

2. *See nongradedness interpreted into action.* The nongraded school, and more especially the nongraded primary unit, is not new. Anderson [10] points out in his most recent book that attempts have been made to break the graded school for more than 75 years. Some nongraded schools have been functioning for a quarter of a century and more recently the number of these has increased rapidly. Interpretations of nongradedness vary, and proponents of the philosophy are in accord in orientation rather than in implementation. Some critics consider this a weakness, but I propose that therein lies its very strength. The theoretical proposition of nongradedness is an open-ended one and therefore applicable for all education—from nursery school through institutions of higher learning. Schools have implemented the nongraded philosophy in various directions.

In planning for implementation of a nongraded program, it would be wise, therefore, to provide funds for teams of personnel—board members, administrators, teachers, aides, parents—to be



sent to visit schools now practicing this philosophy. Brickell[11] urges this visitation, also, and succinctly spells out psychological and practical aids in an essay on changes at the local school system level. Some such schools are identified in this and in the January issue of *The National Elementary Principal*. Others may be found in the literature of I/D/E/A.[12] The 36 demonstration schools in this consortium have been selected because of their nongraded, individualized orientation, and many educators in those schools can tell you of yet others with whom they are acquainted. A recent doctoral study by Delgado-Marcano on nongraded schools[13] describes in detail some other elementary schools.

3. *Identify nongraded practices now functioning.* In our visitations to other elementary schools and in conversations with the thousands of visitors to our school, we invariably found a wide assortment of nongraded practices already functioning. The one-room school house, its shortcomings notwithstanding, was a fine example of this philosophy. What other teachers frequently call "good teachers" are those whose techniques and tools provide for a wide variety of individual differences among their students. You as the principal can easily identify these ideas. Refer again to Anderson's statements[14] in the overview chapter and build your list of comparisons. This will help you later in moving from the "known" to the "unknown."

4. *Plan your strategy for change.* Now, you are ready to begin the detailed planning for your nongraded school. At this point, it is appropriate to write a terse, philosophical statement, and this can best be developed by a committee of the whole. This statement serves as a baseline for all decision making. It need not be a term paper or a highly polished essay published to stand for all eternity. It should be a brief statement pointing out the main reasons for the elementary school's existence.

From the philosophical base, a logical next step is to write educational objectives. What do you expect from the years of learning activities? Bloom's taxonomies[15] are appropriate aids, with the cognitive and affective domains well outlined and the psychomotor briefly identified. These taxonomies offer the spectrum of considerations. The use of them moves us away from the old arguments of "adjustment" vs. "3 R's" and gives us a sound basis for developing a variety of learning experiences. A good source to follow can be found in Mager's filmstrips and programed booklet[16] on the preparation of educational objectives in behavioral terms. Stating your educational objectives in behavioral terms will implement your planning of learning activities and evaluation techniques, and this is an important part of planning for change. "Mastery of skills, attitudes, and understandings" needs to be written in terms understood by children and adults. "Reads fluently," for instance, should be written in terms of "the child shows fluency in reading when he" followed by specific, observable, measurable activities. From objectives written this way, the activity of the child, whether it be a skill, an attitude, or an understanding, can be evaluated. Stating objectives in behavioral terms like these does not preclude creative responses, since those possibilities can be readily built into the objectives.

The next step is to plan your strategy for making changes in the school. Earlier it was suggested that you read about change strategy. This area is placed near the upper part of the flower pot diagram to indicate as wide a scope as your school system can afford. If you can include consultants, often called "external change agents," by all means do so. Consultants with high reputation are necessarily expensive, but your school might find a time when such a person is in the vicinity on another mission and you can "hire" his services for an hour. Or, there are often persons of less fame who have actually taken the steps your school is planning. The NEA, through the Center for the Study of Instruction and various departments, is attempting to develop a roster of field consultants to facilitate this exchange of discourse and activity on curriculum and instructional improvement in the public and parochial schools from nursery school through adult education in this country. Often they can point out possible pitfalls, and they can share positive, successful ideas to supplement your own thinking.

If you can identify teachers and administrators within the system who are capable of becoming "internal change agents," find ways to free them for planning the strategy of change. Study your personnel possibilities: Can you buy the services of teacher aides? How does the stability or transiency of your community affect planned change? Can changes be made with the present tax rate or is an increase necessary? What materials and equipment are available or will be needed? Who must be "reconditioned"? What will be the progression of your rational plan?

Take ample time in this step. Many presently operating nongraded schools took at least one year on these first four steps. Some have taken two to five years before actually establishing their nongraded schools. To move from graded to nongraded situations calls for "reconditioning" of all adults involved, and the amount of "reconditioning" needed varies greatly among individuals. The tendency is to draw up the organizational pattern, cite a few examples of possible implementation, and say "We're ready." True, these things need to be done, but not with haste. One of the first lessons to be learned is that nongradedness implies an ongoing, ever-seeking, constantly-evolving process. An appropriate analogy is likening nongradedness to climbing a mountain. The higher one climbs, the broader the horizons.

There is that point, however, when philosophical orientation, educational objectives and their evaluation, and possible alternatives meet, and at this point nongradedness is ready to be established. There is a certain peak of readiness, and the elementary school principal who is sensitive to his faculty and community now moves. This is the art of the educational process.

Establishing a Nongraded School

Steps in establishing a nongraded school will depend largely on your direction of change: Will you attempt to nongrade certain grade levels? Specific content areas? All facets of the entire school? Let's hope you are about to attempt the last, since this is not only the most inclusive but also the most professionally acceptable consideration. Other lesser alternatives soon frustrate participants and diminish opportunities to achieve the behavioral objectives.

But first, may I suggest this is where the elementary school principal plays his most important role. Many people should be involved in the planning stage and the teachers will actually implement many of the specific changes, but you, and you almost exclusively, unless you are in an administrative team situation, are accountable for the establishment of a nongraded school.

1. *Reconditioning.* Unless you are unusually fortunate, there will be new personnel to be "conditioned" and other members to be restimulated, reunited, and reinforced after planning. Some schools are able to pay for secluded retreat-like preschool in-service sessions. Others have to sandwich faculty meetings between district-wide orientation sessions. This reconditioning factor is but one of many examples to support the earlier statement that except for the planning steps, each school's blueprint for establishing a nongraded school is unique.

The principal, at these early sessions, must identify the apparent support of the nongraded philosophy. He must be sensitive to the needs of the adults if he expects them to be sensitive to the children. It is to his advantage, and the advantage of all, to learn what ideas have accrued since the planning session, what tools and techniques have been acquired for implementation, what obstacles seem to be forming. With "conditioned" and "reconditioned" faculty members and aides, the principal begins the implementation of the change process. He has the final decision making for the grouping, subgrouping, and regrouping of the adults in the school.

2. *Physical facilities.* As decisions on learning activities are made, rearrangement of furniture, reassignment of learning centers, and new use of facilities are made much more frequently than in more traditional programs. This necessitates an open channel of communications between faculty, administration, and maintenance men. When facilities must be organized around the facilities maintenance program, learning activities are curtailed. At the same time, the innovative school personnel must recognize that maintenance men compare situations with their colleagues, and frustrated support personnel can diminish the effectiveness of professional energies. Therefore, an important point in establishing nongraded programs is open communication lines with the maintenance and other support personnel.

Another consideration in establishing a nongraded program is to plan on flexible use of space. Areas of interest to house specialized materials and supplies may well be established, but there isn't a specialized area that doesn't include a variety of activities so that space and equipment in another center may not only be used expediently but also tend to diminish excessive departmentalization.

3. *Center of Inquiry.* As the program is being

established, an important function of the principal is the establishment of an ongoing climate for inquiry. To provide personalized learning experiences, teachers must become ever more skillful as diagnosticians, more sensitive to all persons in the school, and more knowledgeable in content, skill development, and structure. Nongraded programs are demanding, but with planning time built into such a program, the inquiry climate is appealing—and long overdue. Robert J. Schaefer [17] says:

> . . . By concentrating upon the distributive function alone, the school effectively imprisons rather than liberates the full power of the teacher's mind . . . if it be granted that teachers represent a potential source of scholarly energy, both they and the situation deserve the opportunity to exploit it.

4. *Public Relations.* Parents need to be informed, included in planning and establishing, used as resource persons, and involved in a commitment to better opportunities for children, but this is placed last of the four major concerns of the elementary school principal because it has often been overrated in the literature. If parents are included in some part of the planning strategy, they will be included in the continued activities. I/D/E/A [18] in a Gallup Poll records evidence that parents are ahead of teachers and administrators in desiring change. Let's quit expecting the lay persons to provide guidance in those areas that are the specialties of the profession.

Maintaining a Nongraded School

All considerations listed under planning and establishing a nongraded school are important in the continuing effective operation of the school. I have an aversion to the word "maintaining," but, regardless of the term, this third step should be the step that focuses most especially on the school as a center of inquiry. This properly moves personnel on to planning again under a slightly different title, "planning for the next modification." Brickell [19] aptly says: "Then as the program moves into use, attention should shift almost entirely to new ones [programs]." Thus, a nongraded program perpetuates the change cycle—from

planning to establishing to continuing inquiry to planning to establishing

FOOTNOTES

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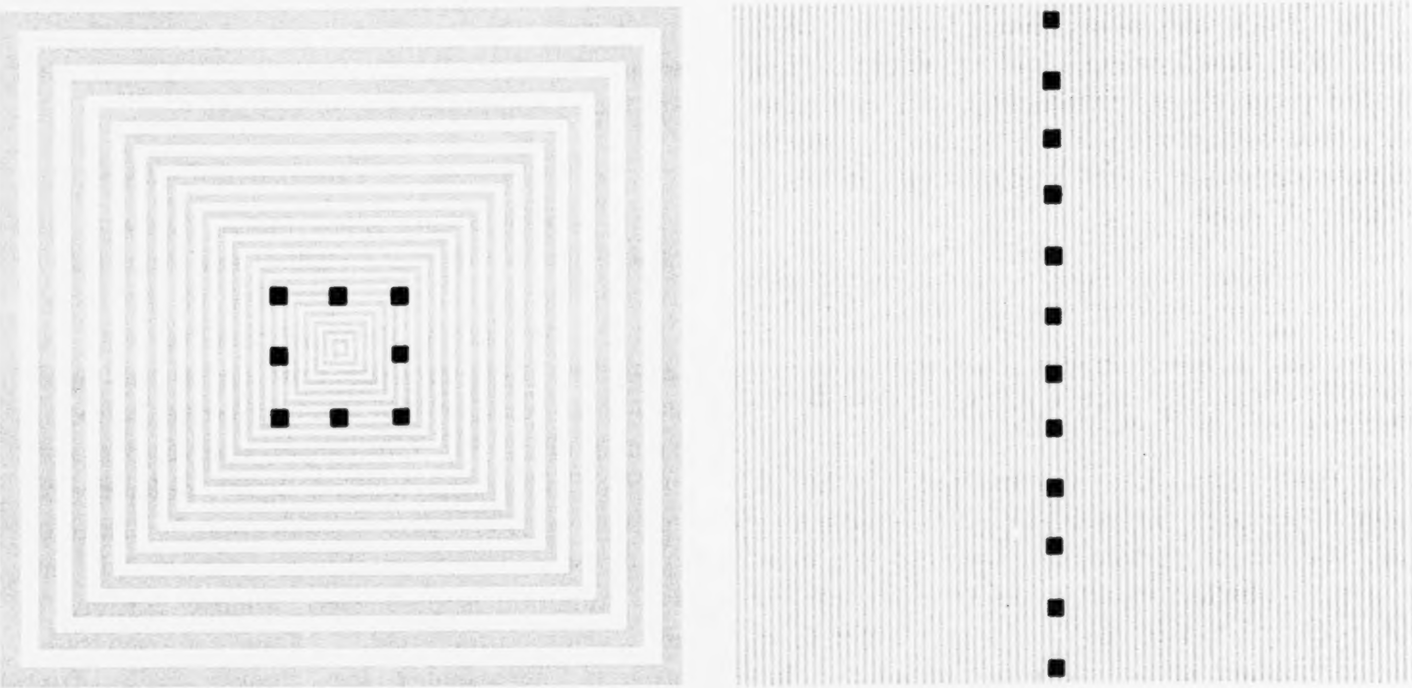
2. Anderson, Robert H. "The Nongraded School: An Overview." *National Elementary Principal* 47: 4; November 1967.
3. See footnote 2, p. 4.
4. See Goodlad, John I., and Anderson, Robert H. *The Nongraded Elementary School.* (Revised edition.) New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963. pp. 213-19.
5. *Schools for the Sixties.* A Report of the Project on Instruction. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1963.
6. National Education Association, Project on the Instructional Program of the Public Schools. *Deciding What To Teach.* Washington, D.C.: the Association, 1963.
7. National Education Association, Project on the Instructional Program of the Public Schools. *Education in a Changing Society.* Washington, D.C.: the Association, 1963.
8. National Education Association, Project on the Instructional Program of the Public Schools. *Planning and Organizing for Teaching.* Washington, D.C.: the Association, 1963.
9. National Education Association, Center for the Study of Instruction. *Rational Planning in Curriculum and Instruction: Eight Essays.* Washington, D.C.: the Association, 1967.
10. Anderson, Robert H. *Teaching in a World of Change.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966.
11. See footnote 9. Brickell, Henry M. "Two Changes for Local School Systems."
12. Howard, Eugene R., Project Director, Institute for the Development of Educational Activities, 42 North Main Street, Dayton, Ohio.
13. Delgado-Marcano, Maria T. *The Operation of Curriculum and Instruction in Twenty Nongraded Elementary Schools.* Bloomington: Indiana University, September 1965. (Unpublished dissertation.)
14. See footnote 2.
15. Bloom, Benjamin S., editor. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives.* New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956.
16. Mager, Robert F. *Preparing Objectives for Programmed Instruction.* San Francisco: Fearson Publishers, 1962.
17. Schaefer, Robert J. *The School as a Center of Inquiry.* New York: Harper & Row, 1967. p. 2.
18. Parents Reactions to Educational Innovations, Gallup International, Princeton, N.J., May 10, 1966.
19. See footnote 9, p. 147.

NEW SCHOOL ORGANIZATION—
SAME OLD



THE keen and continuing interest in new or varied patterns of school organization is reflected in our literature and in our many conferences. A high percentage of the articles in any collection of educational journals deals with some aspect of this topic; conferences that feature discussions of school organization draw large crowds of teachers and administrators. The interest of the educator is obviously great. But what differences have the new organizational patterns actually made in the lives of children?

The time has come when thoughtful educators should ask, persistently, the difficult and necessary questions that will help us to determine whether new organizational schemes have made, or can make, a constructive difference. Has the curriculum been redefined so that children have the opportunity to take advantage of the potential of a nongraded classroom or school? Or does the curriculum still reflect the basic concepts inherent in a graded structure? [1] Are new curricula emerging which give attention to the learnings children can gain from working and interacting with others who are bigger or smaller, older or younger, like or unlike themselves? Does the curriculum provide for the teaching of concepts which prepare children for the world in which they soon must assume leadership and responsibility but have had little part in shaping?

If we considered whether school experiences designed for children are really worthy of those for whom they are intended, how different the experiences might often be! Administrators and teachers who are interested in developing a curriculum which has relevance, excitement, and vitality might want to examine a few thoughts with me. First, let's think about curriculum planning. Then let's turn our attention to certain areas which need new emphasis in planning curriculum content.

A Reexamination of Curriculum Planning

The shift in organizational patterns when a school is moving toward nongradedness invites reconsideration of many aspects of the process of curriculum planning. Among the aspects need-

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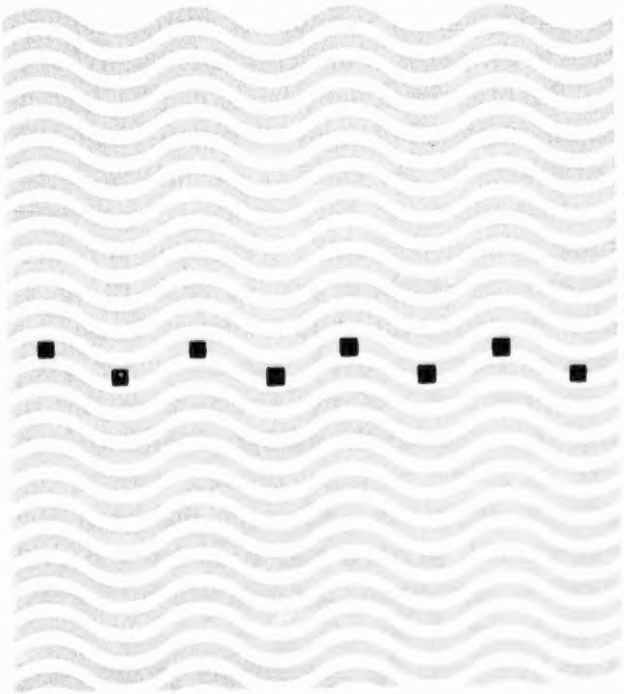
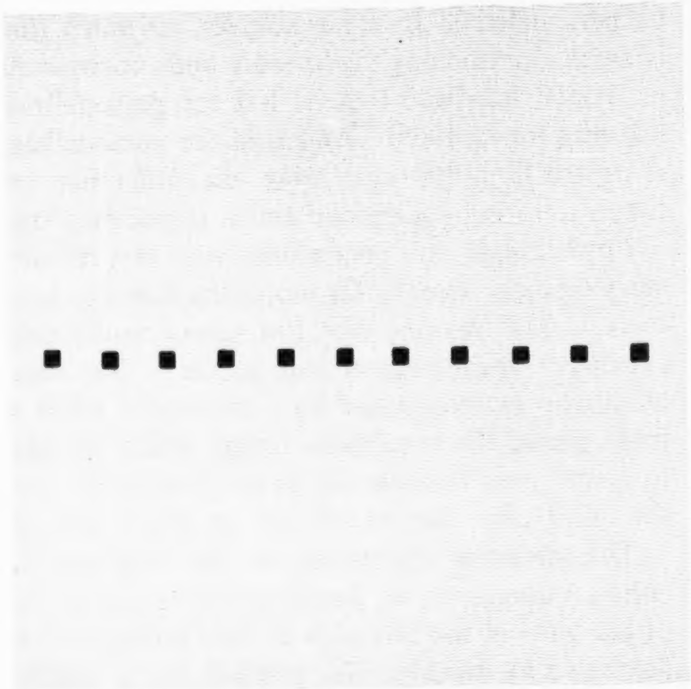
CURRICULUM?

LOUISE M. BERMAN





ing reconsideration are the following:

- Phases of curriculum development
- Personalized assignments
- Hypothesis testing and evaluation
- Emphasis on the child as an integrating being.

Phases of curriculum development. Unfortunately, the term *curriculum* has many definitions, several of which place high priority only upon sequential organization of subject matter, and the equating of written guides with curriculum. Curriculum, however, also can be regarded as an ongoing process which incorporates time components of past, present, and future and is concerned with a very wide number of variables.

One phase of curriculum planning, therefore, involves what happens before the teacher meets a group of children—the work with study groups, the preparing of lesson plans for individual students and small groups, the arranging of furniture and gathering of supplies, the thinking about making a subject come alive.

A second phase involves what is actually happening in a classroom—the on-the-spot decisions a teacher makes about children, content, materials, language, gestures. Many on-the-spot decisions are made almost subconsciously.

The third phase of curriculum planning includes the activities which follow the teaching—evaluation and analysis of children's work, conscious reflection about the decisions made during teaching, and planning of next steps.[2]

In planning for nongrading, it is critical that attention be given to the time aspects of curriculum development because of the complexity of the planning process. Old-time lesson plans written in little boxes of *The Teacher's Plan Book* cannot possibly encompass the diversity and multiplicity of curricular decisions the teacher in the nongraded class must make. Adherence to this earlier concept of planning can only curtail the creative thinking necessary to utilize fully the potential of nongradedness. Nongradedness invites attention to planning which is diversified in terms of pupils and activities and gives attention to time as it relates to curriculum planning.

Personalized assignments. The school does a great disservice to children when it subjects them indiscriminately to a series of humdrum, wearisome, and relatively uniform activities. Today there is a wealth of materials—books, toys, programed materials, and various other kinds of equipment—which teachers can use to enrich their teaching. But the availability of such resources does not insure that children's learning will really be personalized. In some schools, so much time is spent on stocking classrooms with commercial materials that little time is left for personalizing learning for children. And it is the personalizing of instruction that can make the difference between a boring experience and a stimulating one.

For example, the poor reader who sees his own story on paper may be far more stimulated to learn to read than the one who has access to the most expensive technological equipment. The older child who is encouraged by a perceptive adult to think about the conditions under which he likes to create may become far more imaginative than the child who has weekly art or music lessons.

The personal encounter at the level of the child's interest or readiness is important, if one of the aims of the school is to help children think flexibly and fluently. To provide for a number of vital contacts with adults, attention may need to be given to how monies are spent. Bringing in an adult and specially preparing him to develop vital individualized assignments out of inexpensive materials may provide for far more significant learning than scheduling the child into kinds of activities where the material may be individually paced but not personalized.[3]

Children, obviously, should have the opportunity to engage in many and varied tasks in the course of a day. Our plea is that over a period of time children have as many personalized activities as possible to provide the stimulation for involvement in more routine types of assignments.

Hypothesis testing and evaluation. With the newness which constantly besets teachers, principals, and other educators, everyone involved in the education of children should give renewed attention to the evaluation process. This means that curriculum development might involve the designing of hypotheses which are stated in such a way that testing can be carried out readily and easily. Teachers need a spirit of inquiry, the ability to state their objectives in behavioral terms, and the means to determine whether a given course of action will accomplish the stated objective. A more rigorous consideration of the congruence of intent with practice and of the most appropriate way of achieving a given goal should enable teachers and principals to develop curriculum with an awareness of possible outcomes.

As the nongraded school emerges with its possible multiplicity of activities and practices, it is imperative that the varieties of curriculum be subjected to the rigors of criticism and research. In this way, the organizational scheme can be spared the disappointing end of many educational innovations.

Emphasis on the child as an integrating being. In recent years, we have witnessed increased attention to analytical skills in curriculum materials. Teachers are taught to ask the kinds of questions which encourage the child to dissect, to pull apart. Much curricular activity, especially the work of many proponents of the structure of the disciplines, has stressed the asking of questions which cause us to see only the discrete aspects of the academic disciplines. Although the stress should be continued, persons also need help in synthesizing and assimilating the data which they take in into meaningful wholes.

Children need the opportunity to see the total as well as the parts, to see relationships among ideas as well as discreteness, to see binding as well as disruptive forces. As principals and teachers plan for teaching the school subjects, they can make certain that children utilize a range of thought processes in the assignments that are given to them.

New Emphases in Curriculum Content

The substance of the elementary school curriculum must undergo a vast overhaul if children are to be equipped with the tools they need to live productively in the twenty-first century. We should be preparing process-oriented persons—persons who have achieved cohesion of thinking and feeling, a degree of comfort under a variety of circumstances, and an extravagant zest, coupled with responsibility, for the world of which they are a part.

Developing process-oriented persons means introducing new priorities into the substance of the school curriculum. Instead of spending the amounts of time we now spend on the communication skills of reading, speaking, and writing, we might spend more time on teaching communication as the sharing of personal meaning, drawing the skill areas in, as traditionally taught, when this is appropriate.

Specific experiences could be planned to help children learn to perceive more fully. In addition to expanding their perceptive powers, children would gradually be able to discuss their powers of seeing as they develop awareness.

Children would learn, too, the concept of valuing in institutional settings of the school, home, church, and other organizations. To determine appropriate ethical behavior which weds loyalty and responsibility with freedom and choice making is indeed a task to which new efforts must be directed. Value-laden situations in which persons have the opportunity to work through a dilemma provide a setting in which the astute teacher can help children develop a fascination for dealing with the ethical.

Opportunities should be provided, too, for learning such process skills as knowing, resolving conflict, and caring.

Knowing. No matter what the nature of the curriculum, a major portion of the school day for most children is devoted to activities in which the expectation is that children will come to know. Yet how frequently do principals, teachers, and other curriculum workers stop to examine such questions as: What does it mean to know? Is knowledge internal or external to the person? These are philosophical kinds of questions which may seem to have little relevance for the principal or teacher eager to make an immediate difference in the lives of children. But unless we do deal with fundamental questions related to the nature of knowledge, we can never design a curriculum which has integrity and consistency. We need to consider the "structure-of-the-disciplines" approach, the "problems" approach, or any other way of viewing school subjects in terms of our beliefs about knowing.

Teachers and children together can consider such questions as these: What happens when I think I know? Is knowledge something found in a book, something I believe, or both? Should knowledge be systematized in broad or more discriminating categories? [5]

As the area of knowing is explored in increased detail, teachers and children might give attention to the cumulative nature of knowledge. Is knowledge additive in its nature? Or does additional knowledge transform the old? How these questions are answered will greatly determine how school subjects are taught.

In the social studies, for example, if one accepts the assumption that knowledge is essentially additive in nature, then teachers will be concerned with the child's learning additional facts from a preponderance of information. If, on the other hand, the teacher believes knowledge is transformed as new information is gained, then he will be concerned with helping the individual or group use his new information as a catalyst for the transformation of previously acquired knowledge.[6]

In the nongraded school, if the teacher accepts the principle of the transformation of knowledge, there should be opportunity for the teacher and the child to play with old and new concepts until a new synthesis occurs. The nongraded school also offers the chance for younger and older children to share in the transforming experience.

Resolving conflict. If the world is viewed realistically, it does not seem likely that today's children will inhabit a world of peace as adults. In addition to conflicts among nations, it appears that the many pressures the person must face will cause increased inner conflict and conflicts among family and other groups of which he is a member.

Many factors lead to conflict, including differing perceptions of the same situation or phenomenon or differing modes of accomplishing a task. In addition, action-oriented persons are apt to bump headlong into other action-oriented persons. This can result in guilt and bitterness, or it can result in an opening up of ways of viewing the conflict-laden situation so that a similar problem can be handled more effectively in the future.

Children need opportunities to identify areas of personal conflict as they work with others different from them in race, age, religion, or modes of thinking. They need to have access to appropriate adult help to help analyze sources of irritation and conflict when disagreements arise. Children need to develop personalized principles for resolving inner and outer conflict so that growth can be determined in this important area.

Children also should learn to view conflict as a growth inducing aspect of life, realizing that perfect harmony might mean boredom. Because of the heterogeneity which usually accompanies nongraded classes, such classes should provide an ideal situation for children to experience conflict in a setting in which conflict resolution can be taught in realistic and dynamic ways.

Caring. The world that children grow into will probably have increased tensions and conflicts, but it may also provide a setting in which more leisure and the accomplishing of many tasks by automation can mean more time for relating to others. At an early age, therefore, children should be learning skills that enable them to relate comfortably with others. The nongraded school offers a wonderful laboratory for explorations of the young into caring for others.

We can hope that children will learn a particularistic as well as a universalistic way of caring. Universal love seemingly is easier; one can *care* without much knowledge of the ones for whom the person is caring. Particularistic love, however, has a knowledge component. If one can come to know another and care for him simultaneously, one is maturing in his capacity to care.

Caring, too, involves dialogue in the communication process as opposed to a monologue.[7] True dialogue in which there is a real sharing of self is something that the school can teach. Such dialogue ordinarily does not occur naturally. Through providing children feedback about their transactions with their peers, children can move from level to level of caring.

A person who truly cares for another sees beyond the obvious—his coloring, his styles of dress, and the like. He sees to basic qualities of the other person's life. He sees his ways of making decisions, his characteristic modes of thinking, his use of non-verbal communication. Children might search out likenesses and differences between those for whom care is shown and themselves. Statements may begin with superficial kinds of observations but move toward more penetrating ones.

Caring for another necessitates having inner qualities worth sharing. This means that children need moments of solitude in which they can clarify their own thoughts and arrive at a new vision. The person who has not created something fresh upon which to ponder may be uninteresting to himself and others. Newness of thought means increased points of contact and potential caring.

The implication is that within the nongraded class children need opportunities for solitude and reflection as well as opportunities for interaction. Invitations to learning should provide for both.

The world has great need for persons who are comfortable with themselves and others, who have the inner strength to cope with the many challenges which are met daily. This means that persons must know themselves and have the fortitude to share of themselves. The nongraded school can provide a setting in which honest and valid communication can take place if teachers and principals, too, have the stamina to hear what children really have to say. If open communication is not valued, a process-centered curriculum within a nongraded classroom will have little worth.

Schools involved in nongradedness have two choices—the same old curriculum or sparkling new ones. The latter choice can mean new insights for teachers and heightened development of each child's personal powers. If children are to possess the competence necessary for successful living, nongraded schools must give careful attention to developing new curriculums rather than merely reshuffling elements of the old.

FOOTNOTES

1. For a comparison of a graded with a nongraded form of grouping, see Bernice J. Wolfson, "The Promise of Multiage Grouping for Individualizing Instruction." *Elementary School Journal* 67: 354-62; April 1967.

2. The discussion about phases of curriculum development was triggered by Philip W. Jackson, "The Way Teaching Is," *The Way Teaching Is.* Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1966, pp. 7-27.

3. For suggestions about personalizing assignments, see Louise Berman, *From Thinking to Behaving: Assignments Reconsidered.* Practical Suggestions for Teaching. (Edited by Alice Miel.) New York: Teachers College Press, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1967.

4. Some of the material in this section is developed more fully in Louise M. Berman, *New Priorities in the Curriculum.* Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books. To be released in 1968.

5. Teachers interested in pursuing the topic of knowing in more detail might review the following sources:

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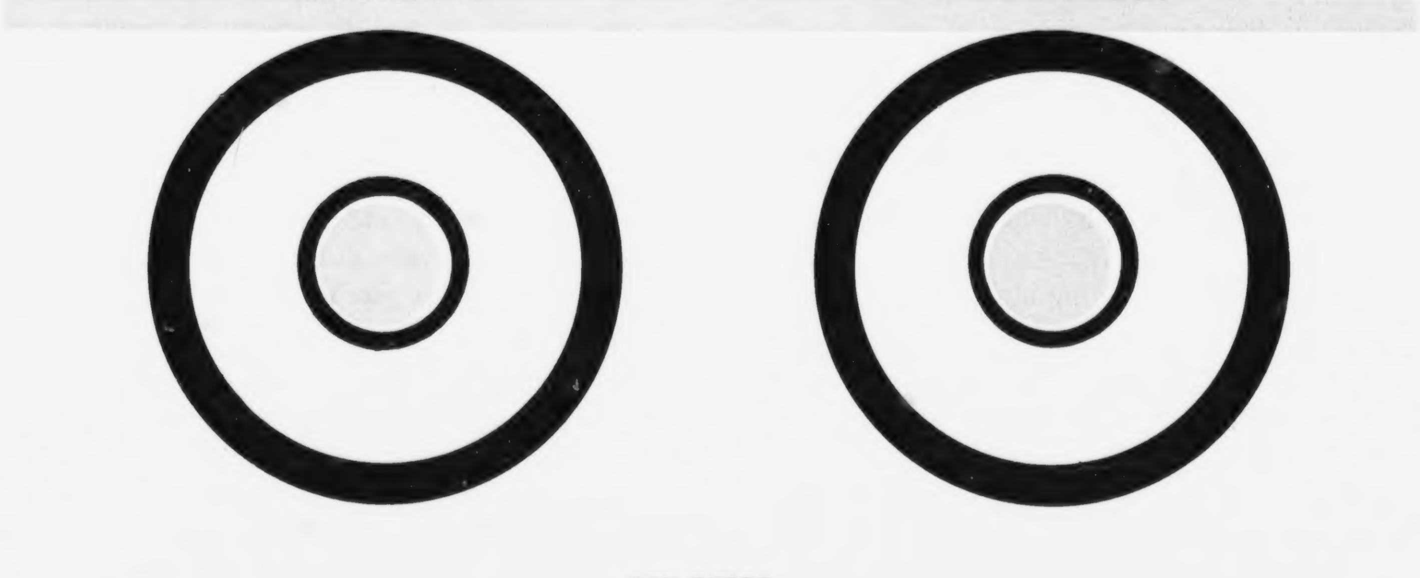
JUMP ON THE
NONGRADED
BANDWAGON?

STOP! THINK!



RAY BUDDE

BANDWAGONS—here comes another one! This one's Nongraded. Remember all the others that have come down the educational pike? We've had—just to mention a few—the Overhead Projector Bandwagon, the CCTV Bandwagon, the Life Adjustment Bandwagon, the Programed Learning Bandwagon, and the Dual Progress Bandwagon. And we've had the Teacher-Pupil Planning Bandwagon and the Pupil-Teacher Planning Bandwagon. I guess you got a little bit different slant on how to run a class, depending upon which one of these last two bandwagons you got on.

Well, anyway, bandwagons make school life more interesting. They look bright and colorful, and they sound intriguing. We usually get something out of the ride, too, even if it's never quite as much as we're promised. Sometimes, of course, we get on a real clunker—but we can always get off and wait for the next wagon. Somebody was saying that this educational turnpike is going to be widened to four lanes to accommodate all the traffic, once federal aid really takes hold.

Well, here comes the Nongraded Bandwagon. Shall we flag it down? Or shall we let it go by?

Stop! Think before you get on.

By definition, when you *nongrade* or *ungrade*, you're somehow getting rid of *grades* or *grading* or the *graded* school. Let's take a look at what

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we leave behind if we get on the Nongraded Bandwagon.

The Graded Bandwagon came along quite a while ago. There's been some confusion about dates, but it seems fairly clear that it came from Quincy, Massachusetts, way back in 1848, and our great grandfather teachers and administrators got on. This bandwagon has been rolling strong for about 120 years now, and most of us were born on it. There must be something good here—something that works.

Why did the Nongraded Bandwagon get started? Well, large towns and cities in the mid-nineteenth century needed to find a way to organize their increasing numbers of pupils for instruction. They hit on the idea of dividing what was to be learned in each subject into eight parts—one part to be learned during each of the eight years of "grammar" school. A pupil started in the first grade, tried to "complete" what was expected of him in his first year of school, and at the start of the next year, he "passed" to second grade.

What other purposes does the graded idea continue to serve? In addition to defining each year's work, *grading* enables us to count pupils. A lot of people like to count pupils and gather statistics. Pupils are counted and classified by grades for many purposes on the national, state, and local level. Wouldn't you have trouble doing a good job on those attendance registers if you couldn't identify by grades?

Grading tells us something about how much a pupil knows or is expected to know. A third grader in December knows this and this and this. Now, *this* is not as much as a fifth grader knows in December, but it's more than a second grader knows in December.

Grades help authors to decide how to divide knowledge when they write textbooks. And publishers know by *grading* that they must put the right number of stars on the binding of their textbooks so that schools can buy the *right* books for the pupils in each *grade*.

A *grade* also tells us how well or how poorly pupils do as they seek to complete their year's work. In fact, "making the grade" is something that we use in contexts outside of school as well as inside.

In other ways, too, the idea of grade has gone beyond the school walls and has actually become a social-cultural mechanism. Everybody understands you when you say Peter is a *fifth grader*. If Peter is having a birthday party, he's going to invite other *fifth-grade* boys (not girls, heaven forbid!) to his party. From a psychological standpoint, boys and girls see the grade as a very important identification tag.

Grades are rungs on a ladder to adulthood; this is how one grows up in our society. A pupil starts as a small child in first grade, then he becomes a second grader, a third grader, and so on in successive years. In twelfth grade, he becomes a senior and upon graduation he is ready, at least partially, to step out into the adult world.

Before you get on this Nongraded Bandwagon, have you figured out how you and your community are going to take care of the educational-cultural tasks that are now accomplished by the graded system? Are you ready to board the Nongraded Bandwagon?

Stop! Think of all the other ideas that are tagging along.

What's that behind the Nongraded Bandwagon? It looks as though a whole string of vehicles has been hooked on. This is really sort of a "combo-bandwagon," not just a single wagon.

Let's see if we can catch some of the names. There's the Team Teaching Bandwagon, the Flexible Scheduling Bandwagon, the Large Group-Small Group-Independent Study Bandwagon, the Instructional Materials-Library Resources Bandwagon. And there's one more—the Cluster of Rooms (with folding doors) Bandwagon. Some of these vehicles look as if they've been used for some time. Maybe they've been traveling up and down the secondary school pike and now they're looking for customers along the elementary school road.

Actually, when you come to think of it, there are quite a number of ideas tacked on to our present graded system: 24 to 35 pupils in a class, in a "self-contained" 30′ x 30′ room, under a "self-contained" teacher who runs the enterprise. There's no need for much of a library; all the encyclopedias and other books are farmed out to the various classrooms. Our "egg-crate string-of-boxes" buildings, with a community room and offices attached, serve us well for this kind of arrangement of the educational scene.

Maybe when we look closely at the old graded carriage, we'll have to question more than the system of division of work into yearly chunks.

Maybe there's a reason for other bandwagons being hooked onto the Nongraded Bandwagon:

- Is one teacher really able to teach adequately all that today's pupils ought to learn?
- Is there some merit in diversified teams of professional and other supporting personnel working with a base of 150 to 300 pupils, across an age range?
- With the knowledge explosion, is a content-centered and content-dominated curriculum now an impossibility?
- Shouldn't we teach information seeking, selecting, and processing as fundamental skills?
- Doesn't the materials center-library become central to the functioning of the whole school?
- Can we help pupils and teachers to become more creative and productive in the some 1,080 hours they spend together each year?
- Can we organize pupils into varying sized groups and can we also provide time to learn on an individual basis?
- Is it possible to provide teachers with more individual and "together" planning time which will result in more challenging learning experiences for pupils?

Oh, you just want to nongrade. You don't want to bother with all these other things. Perhaps, then, you'd better just let the Nongraded Bandwagon, with its string of trailers, go by. Wait until the next time it comes around.

Stop! Think about the things that are more important than nongrading.

Nonsense. What's more important than nongrading? Nongrading is *it*. Nongrading is going to solve all our problems.

Maybe, maybe not.

Some things are more important than nongrading—or any other feature of internal organization.

The quality of teachers in a school system is of a higher magnitude of importance than any element of internal organization. Number one priority ought to be given to efforts to attract and hold top quality teachers.

And there's the program itself. It's possible, in the enthusiasm generated by climbing aboard a bandwagon, to find yourself and your staff spending countless hours nongrading an *inferior* reading or mathematics program. But many options are now available in the various subject areas. Intensive research projects are being undertaken to test claims of various approaches. Optimum time and effort and money ought to be invested in the original selection process. This, along with becoming thoroughly acquainted with superior programs selected, is an important prior step to nongrading.

Progress is being made in discovering the real causes of learning disabilities, whether they be rooted in brain damage, visual perception, motor coordination, genes, or deprivation in environment and life experience. Professional awareness of what is known about learning and what can be done about it is of greater importance than matters of internal organization of the school.

The increasing knowledge about the structure of the brain, about how learning occurs, and how intelligence is *learned* may well force a drastic reorientation of purpose for elementary education. The Intelligence Bandwagon, when it rolls around again, will offer promise of a new education to create intellectual capacity which may force the abandonment of the step-by-step division of basic skills which is the base for many nongraded programs.

Stop! Think!

Do you still want to climb aboard the Nongraded Bandwagon?

You do?

Do you really know what you're doing?

Do you have nongrading in proper perspective? Do you see its possibilities? Do you also see what's required if nongrading is to be effective? Are you willing to admit that not all your problems will be solved just by boarding the Nongraded Bandwagon?

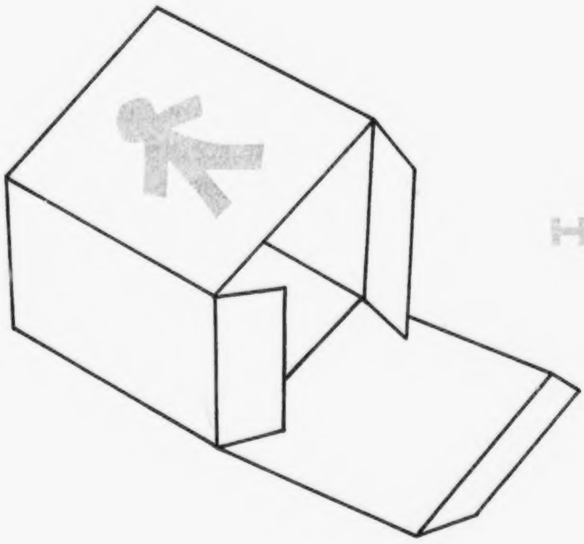
Are you ready to help your staff and community find new and better ways to accomplish the tasks now performed by the graded system?

Are you willing to take a look at *all* dimensions of your present internal organization—the deployment of staff, the utilization of teacher and pupil time, the arrangement of space, how subject matter is made to "fit" individual capacities?

Are you willing to do the kind of thinking and planning and working with staff that will be necessary if you are to get on the Nongraded Bandwagon—and keep it moving in the right direction?

Do you *really* know what you're doing?

You are getting on the Nongraded Bandwagon? Good luck!



HOME-SCHOOL COMMUN

“HEY, Mom! I’m home. Does Dad know anything about computers? We’re gonna learn about ’em, so we gotta learn to work with base two. I’m hungry. What’s to eat?”

The refrigerator door opens and an important home-school communication has just been completed. The message carried the information that the content taught today is different from that of the past. Dad and Mother may or may not understand that content, but it is provocative and interesting to the learner, and, as a result, learning will not terminate with the school day.

We began with this example because the impact of the medium by which this message was transmitted cannot be overestimated. It is in daily use, yet it is often overlooked or ignored by educators as they focus on other more formal modes of communication. Therefore, in planning for effective home-school relationships, we must begin with the premise that the essential ingredient is a fine educational program which produces a happy, productive, learning student. No amount of public-relations-based communication can replace

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1. See *Individualization of Instruction: A Search.* Howes, V. M.; Hunter, M. C.; Keuscher, R. E.; and Tyler, L. L. Education Inquiry, Inc. (Available from ASUCLA Student Store, 308 Westwood Plaza, Los Angeles, California 90024.)

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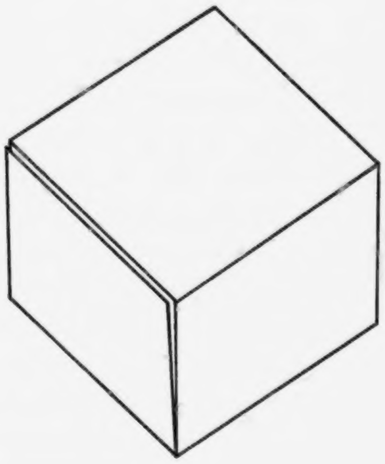
MADELINE C. HUNTER



or alter the impact of the educational message inherent in an unhappy, frustrated, nonachieving learner.

This "state-of-the-learner" message, carried home daily by each student, is unmistakable and irrefutable; yet it is not completely satisfying to parents for it carries no causal explanation and, consequently, no cues for modification or extrapolation into the future. It also lacks the relationship of the learner's performance to norm-based criteria which the parent understands—that is, "what he *should* know or be learning." Even more important, there are no indices of the interventions possible if one wishes to alter or reverse the message.

In a parent-teacher conference there is opportunity for the educational message, conveyed verbally or nonverbally by the learner, to be validated or refuted by the message from the teacher. This conference adds 1) the interpretation which is so very necessary, 2) essential dimensions of desirable changes in the learner which seem possible, and 3) information about what home and school might do to accomplish or expedite those changes.

A conference that effects a successful presentation to a parent of the state-of-the-learner and what can be done to enhance or remediate that state is still not the total necessary educational message. The school bears two additional fundamental communication responsibilities. The first is to develop a parent body that is informed about the purpose, policy, program, potential, and problems of the local school as they are spelled out in Robert Anderson's article in this issue of *The National Elementary Principal.* The second is to create a voting citizenry literate in state and national educational problems and sophisticated in the promising innovations and research-attested solutions to them.

Thus schools have the responsibility for communication at four levels of increasing generality:

1. The message from the learner himself—that is, "the state-of-the-learner"
2. The message from the teacher which consists of additional information plus interpretation, extrapolation, or plans for modification
3. The relationship of that message to the parents' understanding of the local school—that is, "the-state-of-the-school"
4. The more general educational "state-of-the-nation" message.

The frequently held assumption that a "nice-to-have-had-Johnny" parent conference, much less a report card, could fulfill this fourfold communication responsibility is obviously naive and must be replaced by a deliberate, carefully planned communication system designed to accomplish precisely specified objectives at all four levels.

A nongraded school with its commitment to individual diagnosis, custom-tailored educational prescription,[1] and a school organization designed to create a pharmacy of educational alternatives from which that prescription can be filled should produce the optimal daily state-of-the-learner message. Because the philosophy and organization of the nongraded school emerged as a result of the application of research in learning to the many problems of the graded school, the nongraded school has the potential for developing learners who are more successful and who progress more rapidly. As a result, the message carried home daily by the learner is more likely to be the one Dad and Mother are hoping to hear.

It is at the next level of communication, teacher-to-parent, where the nongraded school faces a unique challenge, for the message of diagnosis and prescription is new content often expressed in vocabulary to which the parent cannot attach meaning. Small wonder Dad wishes to know if his son is getting an "A" or an "F" in fifth-grade reading. This is vocabulary to which he is accustomed. While it really conveys little educational meaning, at least he knows whether he should be proud or humiliated and whether to reward or to punish.

The successful parent-teacher conference in a nongraded school must be based on parents' understanding of new educational concepts expressed in unfamiliar vocabulary. "Individual differences," "sequential learning," "alternative placements," and "continuous progress" are some examples of the many important concepts that are generic to communication between home and school in the nongraded program. It is essential that the nongraded school deal with this responsibility for building a foundation of understanding rather than try to convey a message or explain a program in a language the parent doesn't understand.

While time can be taken in a parent conference to attach meaning to this unfamiliar vocabulary, usually it can be more efficiently and economically done in parent groups. Therefore, in a nongraded school a program must be designed to familiarize *all* parents with the philosophy and rationale of nongrading and the research on which it is based. This implies teachers' and principals' literacy in and comfort with these concepts, something that is not possible if the nongraded organization is arbitrarily imposed upon a reluctant or unprepared staff or installed because it is a fashionable educational device. Obviously, the rationale of nongrading must be expressed in terms which have meaning rather than in the typical pedaguese so laced with statistical concepts that it is incomprehensible to most parents and, unfortunately, to many educators.

Mothers and fathers do have the necessary foundation for understanding nongrading. They are keenly aware of the visible differences in size, shape, rate of physical growth, and personality of their children. They know that the treatment that works with one will not work with another. Through experience they have learned that the frustration which will make one of their children work harder will cause another to give up. They know that they can *tell* one child but must *show* the other. They know that something stimulating to one is exhausting or debilitating to another. They know that Mother can handle one child better than Dad can, but Dad can handle the other better than Mother can. They know that one can work rapidly; the other needs more time. These lessons have been well learned in most families.

This knowledge of individual differences is basic to understanding the concept of nongrading. It is the task of educators to design learning opportunities for parents so that this knowledge will transfer from the familiar family situation to the unfamiliar territory of the academic setting. Adequate provision must be made to minimize (it's impossible to eliminate) the negative transfer from the over-learned errors of parents' own school experiences and the universal stereotype of the astrologically based graded school.

This type of learning is often best accomplished in groups where parents can look at an educational picture of a typical graded classroom. Graphs, charts, and pictures can present educational differences in as vivid a way as their physical counterparts. Variation in height and breadth of reading ability can be as understandable as inches in stature. The sequential ordering of learning can become as obvious as layering bricks for a wall. In mathematics, the range in computational abilities and ability to understand numerical relationships which necessitate a different educational treatment for each learner can become comprehensible if skillfully "taught," not just "told." The most difficult concepts—such as learners' differential response patterns to styles of teaching, modes of learning, sensory modalities utilized, and tremendous personality variance—are already well-known to parents. They simply need to be identified at a conscious rather than an intuitive level as important properties of a child which can propel or impede learning, and, therefore, must be taken into account at school as well as at home in order to produce an effective educational program.

Next, parents must have these ideas translated into meaning in terms of their local situation. What will be changed? How are these changes rooted in a philosophy based on individual difference and related research? What will be the result of their application to the organization of the school? What are the differences in terms of the things a student will be doing? Most important, how will nongrading result in an educational environment where *learning for each child can be increased?* Lamentably, the fundamental purpose of nongrading—that of increasing learning—is often lost in the labyrinth of a different kind of class organization or instructional grouping. Most important, the belief that somehow it is a sin for an older child to be in a group with a younger one must be effectively laid to rest.

Only when a parent is able to deal with these ideas at the impersonal level of generality of the total school can he utilize them in the emotion-laden situation of separating "how I would like mine to be" from "how he is presently performing." This transfer of meaning is fundamental to a productive parent conference. Having understood the significance of differing teaching styles, a parent can apply this information when the type of teacher who appears to be most productive with her youngster is identified and prescribed. Knowing the potential for productive peer group manipulation makes it possible for the parent to consider more objectively the reasons for the composition of certain instructional groups to which her child has been assigned. Comprehending sequence in learning tasks should do much to alleviate the "fractions-in-the-fifth-grade" syndrome which is the vestigial notion that plagues all educational change. As educators we need to look at all the "why-can't-they-get-it-through-their-heads" problems and hold ourselves accountable for the same learning gaps in parents that the nongraded school was designed to eliminate in their children. Acknowledging and accepting this responsibility, the nongraded school needs to develop a sequence of learning opportunities prescribed for parents (usually group meetings) which are designed to close those gaps.

It is interesting—but incomprehensible—that educators in a nongraded school can deal comfortably and fluently with the fact that Johnny cannot jump from counting by tens to percentages without some sequential intervening steps, yet those same educators may flail resentfully and unsuccessfully at the problem of parents who can't jump from the traditional, predictable lock-step of the graded school to the multi-dimensional sensitive variance of nongraded organization.

It is imperative to realize that the relatively simple notion of reporting pupil progress through parent conferences rests on the success of two highly complex learning environments. One is designed for the traditionally accepted learner—the student who is to be educated. The custom tailoring of his educational environment for maximum learning has resulted in nongraded schools. The second learning environment rests on identical educational principles—those involved in custom tailoring the learning opportunities needed to develop knowledge and understanding in the parent body which supports the nongraded school. Schools must create effective educational environments for both of these groups of learners, or successful and satisfying parent conferences cannot become a reality but will remain a superficial exchange or camouflage of which all participants are suspicious.

Only if they fulfill their educational obligations related to the state-of-the-learners and state-of-the-school can educators focus productively on the content of a successful parent conference. Here interviewing theory from the field of social work is the data source which guides us—a source notable by its absence in the preparation of teachers. The fact that teachers probably hold more interviews than do members of any other profession makes their lack of preparation in interviewing techniques only more incomprehensible.

Social work identifies four important assumptions upon which a successful interview or conference must be based:

1. An interview is a contract between two people in which both are contributing and receiving. The purpose of this contract should be clearly established so that each party is aware of and agreeable to its limitations, and neither is antici-

pating an outcome not possible within this contract.

2. Any productive interchange between two people is infused with the emotions inherent in their interaction. These emotions should be recognized and dealt with lest interference or distortion of the message result.

3. The physical setting of a conference must be one conducive to focus and as free as possible from distractions or anything that might indicate that the interview was a routinized procedure and not important to teacher or parent.

4. At the termination of the conference, the satisfactory achievement of its purpose must be consciously evaluated to determine to what degree the initial contract has been fulfilled.

Translated into the setting of a parent conference, these principles indicate that the purpose of the conference must be clearly established. Is it a conference to elicit from the parent information relevant to the teacher's understanding of the child so that educational planning can become more precise and productive? If this purpose is established, the parent will not expect to find out exactly how his child is doing in each subject area after the first few days of school.

Is the purpose of the conference to convey an accurate picture of the performance of the child at this moment in time? If so, a discussion of his first-grade teacher or the problems of American education is clearly out of order.

Is the purpose of the conference to plan ways of enhancing, dealing with, or changing the learner's present behavior? If so, we should have already established what that behavior is so that time is not wasted on "he-is-he-isn't" discussion.

While a conference may cover more than one of these categories, it is important that we identify which one is in immediate focus so that teacher and parent are not tuned to different channels with the resultant static and interference in communication. Usually, it is more productive to first hold a conference for the purpose of getting acquainted and eliciting information from the parent and at a later time schedule a "state-of-the-learner-and-what-we-plan-to-do-about-it" conference. Obviously, time available dictates whether we can afford the luxury of several conferences or must economize and telescope all purposes into one interview.

Related to the purpose of the conference is the emotional loading inherent in any human interaction. If parent or teacher is dissatisfied with the results of his efforts, the possible defensiveness or resentment should be recognized and taken into account or it will block accurate encoding or decoding of the message being transmitted. Acknowledging feelings by "I suppose we're uncomfortable because we both want so badly for him to succeed" can do a great deal toward freeing each member of the conference to hear the other. "You really must be anxious to hear how your child is functioning in a nongraded school" can recognize and dignify the very normal anxiety of a parent whose perceptions are contaminated by the memory of a very different kind of school organization. "I'm sure you're wondering why we aren't memorizing spelling lists or diagraming sentences" acknowledges the justifiability of a parent's illiteracy in contemporary curriculum and methodology.

A climate for productive communication between parent and teacher exists when 1) the setting is protected from distractions; 2) the purpose of the contract for interchange in the conference has been identified and mutually accepted; and 3) the presence of personal feelings has been acknowledged and made acceptable, rather than denied or repressed. At the termination of the conference, an inquiry into the degree to which expectations and identified purposes have been realized provides an index of the success of that communication.

Now let us turn to the main body of content in the parent conference. What information does the parent have a right to expect, and what information does the school have the responsibility to convey? The parent arrives at the conference with information and feelings resulting from the daily impact of the message communicated verbally or nonverbally by his child. The consonance or dissonance of this message with parental expectations determines whether he is seeking validation, repudiation, or remediation. He has every right to this information. "How is my child doing?" is a legitimate question, not classified information which is the sole property of the school. Unfortunately, too often this information is sought only in the most obvious academic areas, and the answers are superficial and nonproductive when expressed in general terms ("fine," "not so well") or norm-based criteria (fifth-grade reading or 3.9

in math). The latter, even when accurate, unduly emphasizes the static rather than the dynamic aspects of a learner's progress and, as a result, gives only partial information.

Parents and teachers need to learn to ask and answer in language which carries more information. "He can read better than most boys his age, but he seldom does! For instance, ..." "She seems to understand what she reads but has a difficult time when she needs to apply the information in a new situation. Yesterday she . . . ." "He reads so well we are going to expect him to analyze the difference between authors' points of view. We plan to begin by . . . ." In each case a specific example of behavior needs to be cited so the parent knows the type of evidence on which the evaluation is based.

The state-of-the-learner message in a parent conference must deal with the child's position in each academic learning sequence and the degree of cognitive complexity with which he is able to operate at that position. "He can perform quickly and accurately all four operations in math. Now he needs to work on the analysis of situations so he is able to select the one appropriate for use. For example, yesterday when we were asking questions about the average daily rainfall, he wasn't sure whether he should divide or multiply." Or, "He reads well at this level. Before we increase the difficulty of the material, we are going to work for speed and increased interest in reading as a leisure-time activity. Just yesterday he . . . ."

Reporting a child's academic performance is essential, but it is only one part of an adequate parent conference. The same type of information needs to be communicated in other areas of major relevance to his success in learning. "Where is he in the development of intellectual, emotional, and social maturity and independence?" is a question parents need to learn to ask and teachers must be prepared to answer. Has the student learned there are other people in the world who have rights and to whom he has responsibilities, or is he still at the solo-flight stage? Has he developed effective ways of coping which vary with the problems he encounters in his environment, or does he always respond the same way, regardless of the situation? How dependent is he on adults to remedy a situation or propel his learning? Is he questing intellectually, or does he still need a teacher for "priming his pump"?

Obviously, the emphasis and time spent on such questions vary with their importance in accurately assessing and describing the performance of different learners. The omission or inclusion of each of these facets, however, must be the result of a conscious decision rather than happenstance or feelings of the moment. Obviously, any omission of information, no matter how important, is defensible if it is made consciously on the basis that its inclusion would seriously interfere with learning. The decision may be made to omit *at this moment in time* information about a child's problem in math or in reading or on the playground, because discussing it would produce results inimical to the educational welfare of the learner or his parent. Notice *"at this moment in time";* we are simply rescheduling the information in a sequence of communications, not pretending it doesn't exist or sacrificing our integrity by not reporting it.

Now let us consider the responsibility of the teacher in the parent-teacher conference. An over-arching responsibility is to function in such a way that parents, having learned the degree to which information can be transmitted in a professional interview, will never settle for less. You don't hear the demands of "Back to the old ABC report card" from parents who have experienced truly professional communication concerning diagnosis and prescription for their child. "I didn't realize you knew him so well!" is a typical comment. To achieve this end, teachers must possess the relevant data on each child and have the skills necessary to interpret and transmit it in a language comprehensible to the parent. This facility in communication is not easily come by but can be learned by almost any teacher who wishes to develop expertise in this area. It has been demonstrated that it is possible to design in-service educational opportunities with high probability of achieving this professional end.

The teacher's responsibility in a parent conference begins with presenting specific information about a child's performance at this moment in time, and extends into communication of the formerly unexplored area of how professional knowledge of learning theory [2] can be utilized to enhance this performance and raise it to heights hitherto undreamed of or achievable. Small wonder such a conference results in parental appetite for more complete and meaningful information than can ever be conveyed by a report card.

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[2] Three books in a series by the author of this article illustrate application of research to the clinical situation: *Motivation Theory for Teachers, Retention Theory for Teachers, Reinforcement Theory for Teachers.* El Segundo, California: TIP Publications, 1967.

Does it sound like educational Utopia? It is! But research is pointing the way, and clinical application of that research is making the path more traversable than we ever hoped possible. Educators need no longer look at a learner's educational history as *the* predictor of his future; rather, they look to it as a data source which gives the clues necessary to make plans to extend or remediate the present, thereby enhancing the future.

These plans need to be communicated to the parent for two reasons. The first is essential to maintaining our professional integrity in communication. "It seems likely that your son's strength lies more in his social and persuasive skills than his intellectual ones; however, we are going to . . . ." Or, "We are concerned with Mary's seeming disinterest and lack of effort; however, we will try to increase her feelings of success and adequacy in an effort to increase her motivation to learn." The second reason for communication is the very real need for possible correction by a nonacademic perception, plus the essential out-of-school feedback which can come only from parents. "Johnny says he doesn't volunteer answers in school because the other boys and girls tease him when he is wrong." Or, "Suzy says she doesn't understand the social studies assignments and asks me to help her."

By combining the in-school and out-of-school perceptions, each building correction into the other, a powerful parent-teacher team can be operated with the common purpose of increasing a child's learning as its ultimate goal—the same goal which generated the creation of the nongraded school.

We now need to consider the fourth communication responsibility of the nongraded school, that of developing a voting citizenry literate in the problems of American education and the possible and promising solutions to them. Parents need to know that the principles of learning are pervasive whether the learner be gifted, typical, or disadvantaged. A school that addresses itself to the invariance of learning rather than to the spectacular, à la mode variants should generate a parent body that has an intellectual and emotional background for dealing productively with the educational problems confronting the nation rather than a parent body that is attracted or distracted by every crash program and dramatic panacea that crosses the national horizon. Such innovations as programed instruction, teaching machines, flexible scheduling, computer-aided education are placed in proper perspective and understood as promising means rather than as ultimate ends. This educational sophistication is not the result of superficial, vicarious experiences but emerges from direct experience with a program of research-based, viable education for their own children in a nongraded school. Needless to say, a parent understandably retreats to the "good old days" when his own child is not progressing satisfactorily. Successful school experiences, augmented by interpretation by school personnel, can be generalized to the education of all youth, regardless of ability, previous experience, color, creed, or socio-economic level.

In summary, let us review the communication responsibility of every school—a responsibility which has been brought into sharp focus by the productive innovation of nongrading. The first responsibility is to send home daily, through the medium of the learner, a positive state-of-the-learner message. The message is inevitable; the content of the message depends on the quality of the educational program existing within the school. The second responsibility is to validate or modify this daily message through the medium of a parent conference and extend it with interpretation, extrapolation, and development of plans by which it can be enhanced, modified, or remediated. The third communication responsibility is concerned with creating, by planned educational opportunities (not by wishful thinking or sheer luck), a parent body which is capable of receiving, understanding, assisting with modification or accepting the message transmitted in a parent conference. The last communication responsibility which educators can no longer ignore or delegate is the conscious and deliberate creation of an educationally literate citizenry.

Only by having accepted and fulfilled these four responsibilities can we as educators in a nongraded school achieve our goal of establishing productive parent-school relationships.

SYMPTOMS OF WHEELPHILIA

--A DIAGNOSIS

FRED P. BARNES

THE wheelphile is an interesting kind of person closely associated with the present whirl of innovations, experimentations, disseminations, and grantsations. This kind of person evidently has a fatal attraction to the elegant physics of the wheel, for he discovers it again and again regardless of his immediate research and development projects. Coming out from elaborate encounters with sophisticated designs, formulas, calculators, mimeographed reports, computers, and pencils, this person is likely to reveal the remarkable fact that regardless of the subject of his research he has invented the wheel anew.

In fact, the wheelphile has of relatively recent date become such a regularly noticeable incomer to educational research and innovation that some careful attention has been given to his ecological characteristics. In addition, he has been studied in a taxonomic sense, something like the two Kinsey taxonomies were done—unbelievable but fascinating. Because of the attention given the wheelphile and his products by discerning investigators in the school business, it is now possible to describe a few of his characteristics.

The behavior of a wheelphile may be conceptualized, in the language of psychiatry, as a syndrome or pattern of characteristic symptoms. The symptoms may occur one at a time in splendid isolation, or they may be observed with two or more of them occurring together in harmony. This miasma has been classified and given the collective name of *gyrostatics,* which means an incurable fondness for and attraction to rotation, which in turn gives rise to wheelphilia. Among the symptoms are five which have been factor analyzed and shown to be principal factors in wheelphilia. The five which show maximum loadings have been identified as:

1. The semantic love affair
2. The exchequer bedazzlement
3. The ostrich influence
4. The tricks or trites habit
5. The nongraded nuptials

It remains now for us to look briefly inside each

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of the symptoms in order to understand their workings in the onspeeding world of novation. Perhaps this exercise will call to mind the specter of investigators or projects as yet dimly classified, or—spare us—we may even be tempted toward the hazard of self-diagnosis.

The Semantic Love Affair

When past and conventional ways of talking about usual phenomena get to seem old hat and something new is needed to advertise wanted erudition, the wheelphile simply changes his words, whether or not he really understands what the words mean. The effect is electric; now he is scholarly without question.

Something like this happened when the word "discipline" replaced in academic lingo the well-worn term "subject matter." This chameleon effect appears innocent enough, but in a sense it is bizarre:

> It is interesting and perhaps significant that this meaning of the term discipline, which is widely accepted today, was considered archaic a generation ago. See the second edition of *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language* (unabridged).[1]

Also interesting is the fact that Bruner's oft quoted *The Process of Education*[2] seems comfortable in referring to what schools teach as *subjects,* and has no entry in the index under the term *discipline,* but then introduces a new potboiler in the term *structure* (which may be a substitute for discipline). The new idea of structure used to be called frame of reference, or something like that, but that olden term is no longer glittering or fashionable. Nevertheless, introduction of the term, structure, has caused some thought as though a new reality has been discovered:

> . . . specialists in the academic disciplines do not seem too certain just what is the structure of the knowledge with which they deal. Recently a distinguished professor of English stated that there is no recognized and accepted structure for the subject matter with which he deals. One has only to look at the graduate school catalogs in English to see that many approaches to organization are made.
>
> . . . .
>
> Thus one wonders whether the concept of designing the curriculum of elementary and secondary education on the basis of the structure of knowledge is not about as slippery as some of the other concepts that have been emphasized in the past.[3]

On the same general subject, the ubiquitous Martin Mayer observed in relation to the teaching of the social studies:

> Actions taken to overcome difficulties will of necessity be interdisciplinary, because reality is not to be encompassed by the focus of any one discipline. Teaching which fails to convey the limitations as well as the uses of a single discipline can hinder the formation of the synthesis implied in the choice of real actions. . . .[4]

But disciplines, structures, and syntheses aside, the wheelphile rolls on toward his destiny. It has been nothing short of beguiling in recent times to read and hear about the easy conversion of many past generalists to the semantic ranks of the specialists, whether or not they could honestly lay claim to any personal specialization. But at least the former integrationists exude an aura of consistency. Single disciplines imply narrowing the focus of specialization, and therefore the worn out phrases of a tired day had better give way to the new—like an unsteady New Year's Eve. And the past educational arguments on the relative social values of specialization vs. general education will look better swept under the rug anyway.

The Exchequer Bedazzlement

There is a cynical saying among researchers that if research findings tend to leave doubts and frustrations, money will make everything right and acceptable. The wheelphile is prone to absorb this sort of dry wisdom quite naturally, for he has observed it in action even while not deliberately looking. Furthermore, it is patently easier to expend money, other than one's own, than it is to go through the paraphernalia of controlled research. And, conveniently enough, there is a ready-made set of semantic rationalizations to accompany exchequer bedazzlement.

This phenomenon has been noted frequently in the literature attempting to assess or explain the numerous national curriculum projects sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education, the National Science Foundation, or private funding agencies. The paternal curriculum study which set the pattern for most of the ones to follow is the Physical Science Study Committee program which was launched by Jerrold Zacharias of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology one year before Sputnik and still continues.[5] Zacharias has convincingly followed the military theory of the "critical mass" which insists that a successful attack on a big job requires massive doing. In this case the massive doing included a total of 5¼ million National Science Foundation dollars, beginning with an initial grant of $600,000. And the National Science Foundation dollars were joined by sizable amounts from the Ford and the Sloan Foundations.

At no time did the Physical Science Study Committee scientists place any great weight on scientific measurement. They preferred instead to work with impressionistic and intuitive feedback from those who were learning and teaching the material. The committee made its own assessment on the basis of judgment. In this respect the Physical Science Study Committee was not researched and came closer to the pre-research style of naturalistic research models than it did to the classical model of controlled experimentation. Several local projects, like those of Portland, Oregon, and Moline, Illinois, have followed this style, including the selection of only high ability secondary school students as subjects. But with an exclusive selection of very bright students, how could such projects fail to show gains—derived judgmentally or otherwise?

Probably one of the most delightful contributions of the Physical Science Study Committee Project, and other projects in the sciences and mathematics, has been the work of the scientists and mathematicians, largely unaware of a theory of instruction, painfully developing piece by piece a philosophy of teaching roughly similar to that of the early progressives. Education for them has to be active. An ounce of discovery is worth a ton of memorization, and the ability to perform cannot always be equated with the ability to verbalize. But this has been strictly an unanticipated circular gain, and many of the national curriculum projects still have not been rigorously subjected to any kind of controlled experimentation. Of course the question is left open whether successes may spring from working with a selected group of very bright youngsters, or whether the successes inevitably follow the pressurized logic in the critical mass of big money and the consequently flashier tricks and tools bound to accompany it.

This is not an attempt to de-emphasize any of the lavishly financed projects which are becoming more numerous with government grants and aid. Rather, the attempt is to delineate a pattern which has conveniently been laid for the wheelphile in his circular tendency to make his singular type of discovery.

His ready-made set of rationalizations is also set to go: 1) There are no academic tests capable of measuring such advanced learning; ergo, no measurement, no traditional research. 2) The understanding of projects in science, mathematics, and the like is beyond the ordinary mind. 3) Where methods and procedures for learning the new subject matter are obscure, they may be labeled as *heuristic,* which means, according to the *American College Dictionary,* "serving to find out; furthering investigation," an obvious self-serving meaning which should dampen further curiosity on the part of practically anybody.

The heuristic approach evidently depends centrally on intuition, and thereby the mystique of the process builds an effective duck blind for the academic hunter. With this much secure, the wheelphile is given a hunting license to discover on his own at random. Such discovery does not represent the controlled redundancy of science; it may come closer to replicating Madison Avenue.

The Ostrich Influence

The ostrich fable has the bird intentionally concealing that section of its anatomy which is necessary for using available information. Without dwelling on the anatomical section at the other end, displayed to outside onlookers, we will examine the stance of the wheelphile when he assumes this position. Former established and reestablished findings related to teaching are conveniently ignored as though they never were a part of education's knowledge bank, and the wheelphile with fanfare again reveals them.

To illustrate the dynamics of this symptom it is necessary to go back three decades to the time when Terman was testing the standardization population for the new Stanford-Binet Tests of Intelligence. As a side interest Terman became curious about the relation of children's IQ's and fathers' occupations. He studied the scores of a large number of children from 2 to 18 years of age. Then he grouped the IQ scores by the occupation of the fathers. He found that, irrespective of age, the children of professional fathers stood more than 20 points higher than those of day laborers or slightly skilled workers.[6]

This same sort of study has been conducted many, many times since Terman and has confirmed his findings. But in 1965 Henry Chauncey, President of the giant Educational Testing Service, admitted in that organization's annual report that intelligence tests test a great deal more than intelligence and should be replaced by something less deceitful.[7] Another recognition of the encroachment performed by tests on the social status of testees and their parents was written by sociologist David A. Goslin. "Most tests test not only the individual, but also his intellectual environment and those who are responsible for it." [8]

Terman may not have realized the social import of his findings but he established the gross framework of meanings to come. When used as the basis for placing children in instructional groups, IQ tests have the fiendish talent to sort children into social-class groups. Obviously, had Terman's standardization sample been grouped for instruction, the children of professionals and managers would have found themselves in the "fast" group, the children of clerks and mechanics in the skilled trades would have formed the "average" group, the hapless children of unskilled workers would have been consigned to the "slow" group, and more boys than girls would have been found in the slower classifications of all groups. And that is not all; children with IQ's below 116 account for about 85 per cent of the total population of children and parents, leaving a scant 15 per cent with the totem of belonging to the intellectually elite. Couple this with the commonly observed fact that parents borrow status from the school's classification of their children, and there must implicitly exist something that is not everyone's cup of tea.

This entire scene must be below sand level, for the wheelphile may be found busily turning it to his own advantage and coming up with grants, rationalizations, and "new" ideas for working with youngsters and parents who live four standard deviations south of 100. And remember that Chauncey and Goslin have hinted that these are the same children and parents who stack up in the lower socio-economic levels.

The wheelphile even has a different and approved terminology made for him. Teachers of the old establishment, who have the dubious distinction of having taught during the depression years of 1930-1945, recall the sympathy and extra strain of teaching *poor* kids. But poverty has been glamorized through translation into "cultural deprivation." In addition, it suddenly has become a mark of distinction for secure and comfortable researchers to plumb the ghettos seeking out culturally deprived children—the larger proportion of course being Negro—and trying new ways to pump linguistics and mathematics into their resistant cultural backgrounds.

One must ask the questions: Were not the economically poor children of the 1930's and 1940's culturally deprived? Now that "culture" has been discovered, what is the great difference between children and parents now and children and parents then? The poor child is being deprived of *whose* culture? Not his own, certainly, which is different from the stuffy, regulation middle-class model that makes possible the poverty of the many, admixed with the affluence of the few.

The Tricks or Trites Habit

One of the greatest sources of over-all security for innovators is openly to bet on a sure gamble. This is even better when the gamble is socially blessed by everyone and the risks involved are nil. The wheelphile intuitively heads in this direction, really surprising no one, and bound to succeed through making the trite appear as an important novelty just unearthed. The more obvious and evident the better. Where are the opinion molders who would think to criticize their own cultural biases which must be right, as anyone can plainly see?

Such a benign set of affairs has conveniently surrounded the rash of projects on education for the gifted. The formula is this: select a group of children defined as "gifted" on IQ tests (there is no general agreement where this starts—120+, 130+, 140+, xxx+), collect scores deemed to represent evidence of intellectual functioning—and then be impressed by the finding that the gifted youngsters comparatively score very well when doing intellectual (academic) exercises.

One influential book which summarizes characteristics of the gifted portrays them this way for the edification of teachers and parents:

1. The early use of a large vocabulary accurately employed.
2. Language proficiency—the use of phrases and entire sentences at a very early age, and the ability to tell or reproduce a story at an early age.

3. Keen observation and retention of information about things observed.
4. Interest in or liking for books—later enjoyment of atlasses, dictionaries, and encyclopedia.
5. Early interest in calendars and in clocks.
6. The ability to attend or concentrate for a longer period than is typical of most children.
7. Demonstrations of proficiency in drawing, music, and other art-forms.
8. Early discovery of cause-and-effect relationships.
9. The early development of ability to read.
10. The development of varied interests.[9]

Given a selected classroom group of children who displayed some or all of these characteristics, how could schoolish folkways and mores fail? Nobody but an American pedant would even think of such a list. At any rate the only remaining surprise would have to come from the inverse of customary curriculum appraisal: not how well do these kids do in school, but could they do otherwise? This sort of procedure does not seem to be very sporting, but it is surefire.

The same book on education for the gifted, however, opens a Pandora's box of potential troubles in this area. With surprising candor the observation is made that: "The concepts of the gifted, found in different cultural or national groups, have reflected the values and the types of attainment each group has esteemed. Accordingly, factors such as birth, material wealth, strength, and physical stamina have become the criteria used in different nationalities to designate superior individuals." [10] This identifies the school's concern for educating gifted children as a social-status affair, which is just what it may be. In post-Sputnik America, we are inclined to accept all of the concepts of the gifted listed above, and then add the concept of high tested IQ to what is esteemed, and insist that it head the list.

And the schools deliberately teach this set of concepts to the children and to the parents. So much so that it came as no particular jolt when one youngster was overheard to paraphrase the statement from American political history as, "I'd rather be bright than be president." The suspicion is not groundless that many teachers and researchers borrow considerable luster from being associated with programs for the gifted.

The social-status affair has even led to segregation of the gifted from their more ordinary schoolmates on the grounds that they stimulate each other and may best be taught by segregated teachers. This represents one opening of the Pandora's box concerning which Bruno Bettelheim has presented strong theoretical objections to the effect that such practices sharply detract from what is needed for the gifted, and what is needed for all other students too.[11] Herbert Thelen finds that "Teachers who think bright classes should be more self-directing and able to work more on their own have quite regularly been disappointed." [12] And sometimes very bright students contrive to avoid being placed with elite groups because they see more punishment than reward in such questionable "recognition."

Even the monumental Terman investigation on Genetic Studies of Genius (Volume V) contains unexpected disappointments. The studies followed 1,528 children with IQ's that placed them in the top one per cent of the school population in California, from 1927 to mid-life by 1959. Among the findings reported are these:

1. More than 85 per cent of the group entered college and almost 70 per cent graduated.
2. The Ph.D. or comparable doctorate was taken by 80 men and 17 women, or about 14 per cent of men and 4 per cent of women graduates.
3. We find 86 per cent in the two highest occupational categories: the professions, and the semiprofessions and higher business. About 4 per cent appear in *Who's Who in America.*
4. Although not more than three or possibly four men could be considered failures in relation to the rest of the group, there are 80 or 90 men whose vocational achievements fall considerably short of the standard set by the group as a whole.
5. There are, however, a few fields, all dependent on special talent, in which there has been a lack of outstanding accomplishment. These are the fine arts, music, and, to a lesser extent, literature.
6. The criterion of success used in this study reflects both the present-day social ideology and an avowed bias in favor of achievement that calls for the use of intelligence.[13]

Probably one great impact of the Terman studies is contained in the sobering regret that the carefully selected gifted children did not achieve vastly greater heights than they evidently did. The group produced no great artist, no great musical composer, no Hemingway, no Einstein, no Dewey. This sort of regret no doubt arises from the ordinary person's great expectations aroused by the word *genius*. The Terman group looked stunning when compared to the generality, but compared to the whole group of selected, gifted persons they left a gap (and a large one) between themselves and logical expectations—in spite of the Hawthorne effect which must have played a constant part.

Equally wondrous is the fact that no true control groups in California or elsewhere accompanied this thirty-five year descriptive study. Spread throughout the five volumes of *Genetic Studies of Genius* are references to a "control group of unselected children." This primitive concept of control seems just about as unbiased as using the plane at Kitty Hawk for the control in attempting to describe the operation of a jet plane.

Again, it may be redundant and trite to develop projects with gifted children based on the glittering hypothesis that bright children will do bright academic things. Of course they will. The IQ tests we use to identify the gifted are based on the sort of problems encountered in school. Later success with such problems should be a cinch. Even the tests of creativity developed by Guilford and Torrance fall somewhat short of providing workable alternatives to the IQ test. For instance, there is very little in Guilford's or Torrance's tests of creativity which separates the "kook" from the really creative when imagining unusual uses of a building brick.

The Nongraded Nuptials

The possibility of becoming enamored with a beautiful idea is real. Originally the nongraded school idea was this sort of beautiful idea, simple and elegant; elegant meaning direct, noncluttered, and free from distractions or irrelevant variables. Goodlad and Anderson made a brave stab in this direction when they wrote, "It should be clear by now that the nongraded plan is a system of organization and nothing more."[14] And frequently the beautiful, elegant idea is the most powerful in actual operation if it can retain its clear purposes and singular shape.

In looking for another example of a clutter-free educational idea, the challenging model of Oxford University comes to mind. Oxford, with its startling absence of predetermined curricula, class standings, enforced attendance, clocks, bells, and cafeteria courses, seems to suit education in the contemporary world. The eternal vitality of centuries-old Oxford may be in spite of, or perhaps because of, its original lineage which has managed to retain a charming idea of what education can mean to the students who reside at the other end of the educational ladder.

The brief history of nongrading in America has been a story of how an exciting and uncomplicated idea can get bent under the weight of miscellaneous encumbrances. It seems that a direct and powerful early education can never be enough. We have been compelled to interlard this simple diet with ability grouping, departmentalization, numerous graded reading levels, IQ tests, community helpers, the hundred addition and subtraction facts, modern mathematics, how-to-tell-a-story, linguistics, inquiry training, foreign languages, and readiness for fourth grade. It seems regretful that the idea of nongradedness was not allowed to retain its original elegance. At least, research studies would have been far more pointed, easier to design, and more interesting to conduct. Researchers *do* have trouble when they are confused about what resulting dependent variables can be associated with what experimental variable teaching procedures.

Probably sparked by such a free-for-all approach to nongrading, the wheelphile has left his mark on this version of innovation. Interestingly enough the four groups of symptoms common to wheelphilia, which have already been analyzed and presented in this paper, are easily detected among available reports and writings about the nongraded elementary school. For instance, grade failure semantically becomes regular progress, ability grouping may neatly be smuggled into nongraded class groups, impressionistic and intuitive judgments may seem to serve better than controlled research, and parents quite naturally may rile at the smart of having their children consigned to the slow group or requiring four years for three years of "individualized" school work.

A book[15] which intends "to analyze and understand the nongraded movement rather than sell it," recently appeared among the literature available on nongrading. Whether the intent to analyze really supersedes the Bartered Bride attractiveness of nongrading may be guessed about through the opening statement of the first chapter:

> The nongraded movement is one of the ten most topical and important instructional concerns in American education today, and a continued acceleration of interest in it can be expected for at least the remainder of the 1960's. . . .

In the last paragraph of the book's text, the wheelphile is introduced to other bits of confidential intelligence:

> The nongraded school needs to be accepted partly on faith at the present time, but enough favorable evidence is available to allow us to back the experiment. The nongraded school should not be viewed as a final step in school organization. It represents "a loosening of the plaster" and, as such, it serves an important catalytic function to innovation in general. . . .[16]

Thus the wheelphile is put in possession of incidental information which may easily serve his purposes: 1) the nongraded idea is advertised as important and should be good at least until the end of the present decade, 2) profound faith similar to missionary zeal might be substituted for the rigors of controlled research, and 3) so long as the plaster stays out of the wheels, any enthusiast can be recognized as an innovator in general. In a sort of curious way, recognition of these gross implications of the Miller book may be refreshing. The book is one of the latest examinations of nongradedness since the Goodlad and Anderson treatise published eight years ago and then revised in 1963.[17] Perhaps the wheelphile's current examination of nongradedness will help spin out some of the lingering residual dizziness which inevitably accompanies fresh nuptials.

To begin with, the wheelphile would automatically recite, "something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue"—only to realize with a jolt that he had been led to some of the nongraded devotees' worst forms of dyspepsia. Indeed it would seem that the nongraded bundle is put together from many old customs, a very few new ideas, many practices borrowed from anywhere, and blue reactions when it comes to research. The whole potpourri evidently presents a hairier challenge than even the most redoubtable of the wheelphiles suggest or realize. A mischievous model for beginning with nongradedness would seem to be made up of the following segments: 1) begin with an absence of precise definition for what is to be tried, 2) import a zeal for living with a sensate movement, 3) avoid refined perceptions for what will be encountered in the process, 4) set sail with full knowledge of cloudy compass settings for local navigation, and 5) get used to the chant that more research is needed, which is always the case everywhere.

Just as professional motivation toward nongradedness is stirring, so the stock of research findings to guide decisions is quite disappointing. Sampling some of the reported research studies which have been completed, one finds both positive and negative results. For example, on the negative side, two apparently competent studies have been reported. Carbone's research arrived at "no difference" findings in tests of achievement and mental health when two nongraded school systems were compared with two comparable graded school systems.[18] The Bellevue Public Schools of the State of Washington compared the achievement of fourth grade pupils who had been enrolled in nongraded and graded primary classes in grades one, two, and three.[19] Seventy-two statistical tests of significance were made in the study, with only three differences favoring the nongraded program. Again the "no difference" finding predominated. Perhaps comparative studies will continue to fall short of reaching significant differences. With so many extraneous variables running rampant, this state of affairs might reasonably be expected.

Other literature and research reports tend to lean toward the positive side of the question. The *NEA Research Memo* of May 1965 [20] presents some findings in favor of the nongraded organization. Hillson's book [21] contains a number of accounts of statistically analyzed comparisons of graded and nongraded patterns. Among them, Joseph Halliwell's research report indicates that acceptable levels of significance were reached to reject the hypothesis of no difference. Mary K. Shapski reports her statistical study conducted in an elementary school in Burlington, Vermont. The children's instructional program was nongraded only in relation to reading. When scores for these children were compared with scores for children in two graded schools, the verdict favored nongrading. A three-year experimental program was conducted by Hillson and others. Using a somewhat tighter design than many other studies addressed to this problem area, in one school they randomly assigned entering first grade students either to an E group ($N = 26$) or to a C group ($N = 26$). The E group was nongraded and the C group was graded. The criterion variable was reading achievement. All t tests were highly significant in favor of the nongraded group.

If the future well-being of nongradedness depends on the vigor of well-conceived experimental research projects, and there is every reason to suppose that this is already the overdue case, then some definitely nonwheelphilic simplicity may be suggestive. Five pieces of research simplicity in relation to the nongraded school seem to emerge from the literature and insist upon recognition. Taken seriously the five bits of elegant simplicity might put the wheelphile out of business:

1. Design a nongraded program that is *really* different from its graded counterpart. Perhaps the large number of "no difference" findings in current research studies is simply waving the red flag for what is really there. Perhaps real differences just couldn't be located because E groups and C groups have substantially been doing too many of the same things, instructionally.
2. Maintain simplicity, directness, and sharpness in both the instructional program and in the research studies on that program. Avoid the trap of using sophisticated statistical analyses on a mushy instructional design.
3. Keep research projects focused on researchable questions. It is better to hunt with a rifle than with a blunderbuss when the target has been clearly recognized. Studies on nongrading which reach an acceptable level of significance seem to be economical in their selection of independent and dependent variables.
4. Produce experimental results through the use of research designs alternative to the "nongraded vs. graded," pretest-posttest classical model. There are good alternatives like the posttest-only design, which is especially useful when experimenting with small children who have not yet been indoctrinated.
5. Value replications of promising (or disappointing) studies if and when they are completed. Much remains to be learned from verifying or refuting what is presumed to be known. Similar to most sub-fields in education, replicated studies on nongrading are most noticeable by their absence.

Finale

Trochilics is another term which refers to the science of rotation. The wheelphile would like this word, too, naturally. This paper has attempted humbly to unmask the delicate workings of wheelphilia; but who knows, someday some unheralded wheelphile may gain fame and fortune through inventing a square wheel that works.

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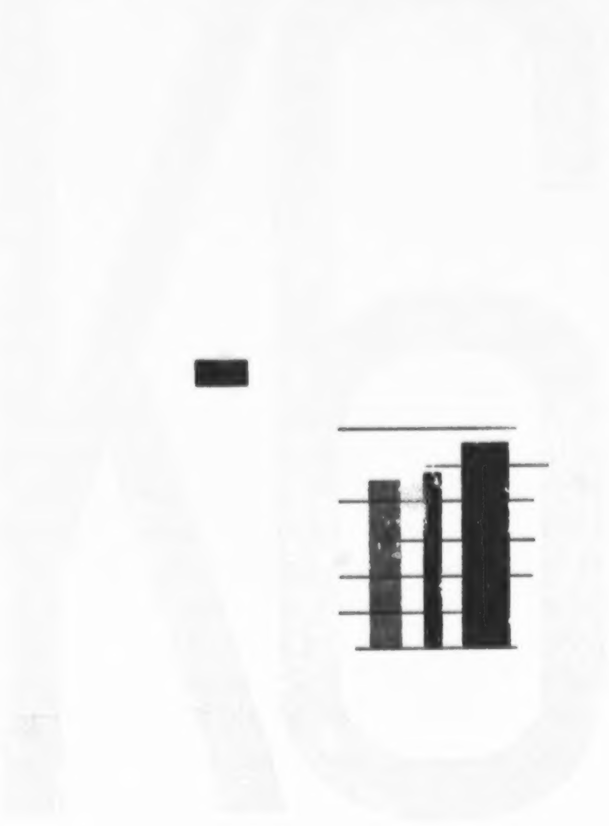
17. Goodlad, John I., and Anderson, Robert H. *The Nongraded Elementary School.* (Revised edition.) New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963.
18. Carbone, Robert F. "Achievement, Mental Health, and Instruction in Graded and Nongraded Elementary Schools." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 1961.
19. See footnote 15, Appendix D, pp. 251-63.
20. National Education Association, Research Division. *Nongraded Schools.* Research Memo 1965-12. Washington, D. C.: the Association, May 1965. 20 pp.
21. Hillson, Maurie, editor. *Change and Innovation in Elementary School Organization: Selected Readings.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965.

NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS—

A Survey of Practices

GILBERT F. SHEARRON
HAZEL WAIT



THE "nongraded school" is a term that appears with increasing frequency in our literature and on our conference programs. The nongraded school itself is less ubiquitous than the term, but throughout the country there are schools that carry the label "nongraded." How does a school become nongraded? What happens in a nongraded school? This article reports the results of a survey designed to assess what is actually going on in schools that are identified as nongraded.

Since there are no complete lists of nongraded schools, we prepared a list of names of nongraded schools from four sources. We used the list appearing in the first edition of Goodlad and Anderson, *The Nongraded Elementary School,*[1] a list we obtained from the United States Office of Education, lists prepared by the 50 state departments of education showing the programs in each state that were reported to be nongraded, and we used schools whose names had been reported in the literature during the past eight years. Our final list contained the names of 728 schools, and we used a table of random numbers to select a sampling for study. One hundred thirty questionnaires were sent out, and 96 replies were received. Replies from 21 schools showed that 1) a nongraded school was no longer in effect, or 2) it had been erroneously reported that the school was nongraded. The analysis of the survey was made on 75 questionnaires. These questionnaires represented 29 states in every geographic region of the United States.

The total number of schools represented in the survey is impossible to determine. The 75 responses were from 34 individual schools and 41 school districts. The school systems reported for the nongraded programs in their districts. These reports included from one to ten schools. There appeared to be no differences in the responses from the individual schools as opposed to the responses from the school districts. Therefore, for the purposes of this paper, the two categories are treated as one. We are assuming that responses

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[1] Goodlad, John I., and Anderson, Robert H. *The Nongraded Elementary School.* New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1959. pp. 217-28.

from a school district are representative of nongraded schools in that system.

The questionnaire was organized into four parts. Parts I, II, and IV were checklists that attempted to assess administrative procedures, instructional programs, and program improvement. Part III attempted to assess strengths and weaknesses through a narrative report written by the respondents.

The survey showed that 51 per cent of the schools reporting had had a nongraded program for less than 5 years; 31 per cent had been in the nongraded program less than 10 years; 16 per cent less than 20 years; and 2 per cent had been involved for over 20 years.

Responses to the question, "How was the change to the nongraded system initiated in your school?" revealed a consistent pattern. The change was brought about by joint efforts of administrators and classroom teachers. There appeared to be little effort to work with institutions of higher learning, state departments of education, or consultants in setting up programs.

Fifty-five per cent of the respondents reported that transition to a nongraded program caused no additional expense. The remaining respondents reported additional cost in instructional materials, equipment, and added staff positions.

The survey questioned the extent of nongrading. Table 1 shows that the nongraded plan of organization is most commonly used from the first year through the third year. Second in rank is the first- through sixth-year scope. If one adds to that the figures for kindergarten through the sixth year, then 30 per cent are using the nongraded plan in the upper elementary school.

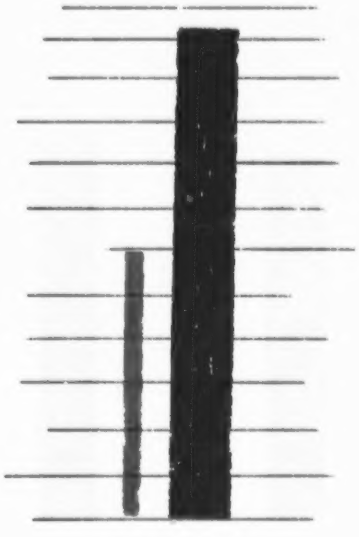


Table 1

EXTENT OF NONGRADING

Years included	Number of responses	Per cent of total
Kindergarten through 3rd year	16	21.3
1st through 2nd year	1	1.3
1st through 3rd year	25	33.3
1st through 4th year	7	9.3
1st through 6th year	17	22.6
Kindergarten through 6th year	6	8.0
Other	3	4.0

The self-contained classroom is still the major method of horizontal organization. Over 75 per cent of the respondents reported that the self-contained classroom was the horizontal pattern of organization. The other responses ranged from patterns that were partially self-contained to team teaching. An analysis of these responses revealed that partially self-contained classrooms usually meant that special teachers were employed in certain subject matter areas such as music, art, and physical education. Team teaching was referred to usually in the sense of a departmentalized school where one teacher taught math, another English, and so on. Only one response defined a team teaching arrangement with a hierarchy of responsibility and a situation where the team shared instructional responsibilities.

Pupils are assigned to nongraded classes in many different ways. Nine criteria for placement were listed, and respondents were asked to check every answer that applied to their situations. In Table 2, these criteria are listed in descending order according to the percentage of respondents who checked the item. The indication is that a combination of several criteria is used by the vast majority of respondents. This seems to indicate that there is a concerted attempt to look at several areas of the development of the child. Some indicated that they used reading achievement as a basis for distributing children among several different teachers, putting children of all levels of ability in each teacher's classroom. However, the majority of responses indicated the use of some sort of ability grouping. Decisions on the placement of pupils are made jointly by the principal, classroom teachers, and other professional personnel.

In response to the question "When may the class assignment for any given pupil be changed?" 91 per cent of the respondents replied that this may be done at any time. However, most of the schools reporting indicated that very few changes were made in assignments once class assignments were set up. It was further reported that in the great majority of cases, teachers in self-contained classrooms remained with the students only one year. A breakdown on replies to this question is presented in Table 3.

Records of the progress of individual children are kept on levels checklists and skills checklists. This was universally the case. These checklists are often supplemented by written narrative evaluations by classroom teachers. Eighty-seven per cent of the respondents reported that they use parent-teacher conferences as a means of reporting pupil progress to parents. This was often used along with, or as a supplement to, a report card. Only 24 per cent of those reporting indicated the use of conferences with pupils or conferences that included both parent and pupil. A basic method of evaluating students appears to be through the use of achievement tests. Many of the schools reported that a combination of achievement tests, teacher-made tests, and observations are used to evaluate students.

Seventy-nine per cent of the respondents reported that some curriculum change had occurred because of nongradedness. This curriculum change was reported to be anything from "using more books" to "more individualized work." Those who indicated no curriculum change commented that "Nongrading does not actually change the curriculum. It is simply an organizational change." However, 91 per cent of those reporting indicated that they had a regular program of curriculum improvement. An analysis of the responses indicated that the curriculum change that was going on would probably have gone on even if the change to a nongraded program had not been made.

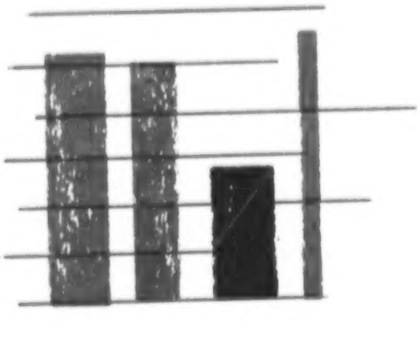


Table 2

CRITERIA USED FOR ASSIGNING EACH PUPIL TO A CLASS

Criteria used	Number of responses	Per cent of respondents
Academic achievement in reading	70	93.33
Teacher opinion	59	78.67
Social maturity	54	72.00
Emotional maturity	51	68.00
Academic achievement in arithmetic	48	64.00
Mental ability	41	54.67
Chronological age	37	49.33
Work habits	35	46.67
Other	10	13.33
Random selection	2	2.67
No answer	1	1.33

Table 3

DOES A TEACHER STAY WITH A CLASS MORE THAN ONE YEAR?

Frequency of change	Number of responses	Per cent of total
Never	9	12.0
Occasionally	54	72.0
Usually	5	6.6
Always	2	2.6
Does not apply	3	4.0
No answer	2	2.6

Pupil-teacher ratio or class size was reported by 59 per cent of the respondents to be from 26 to 30. The figures for this are found in Table 4.

Table 4

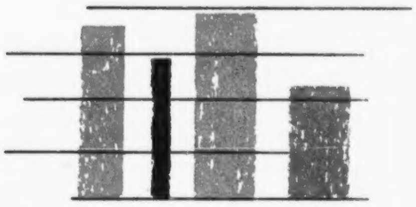
CLASS SIZE OF TEACHER-PUPIL RATIO

Number of pupils per class or teacher	Number of responses	Per cent of total
15 to 20	2	2.6
21 to 25	19	25.3
26 to 30	44	58.6
31 to 35	10	13.3

Table 5

EXTENT OF CURRICULUM CHANGE BECAUSE OF NONGRADING

Extent of change	Number of responses	Per cent of total responses
None	13	17.3
Slight	36	48.0
Much	22	29.3
No answer	4	5.3



The textbook is the most extensively used instructional item in the classroom. However, the responses indicated that a diversity of materials was now being used in some classrooms. Table 6 indicates the types of instructional materials that are used.

Table 6

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS USED

Materials used	Number of responses	Per cent of total
Basal texts	73	97.3
Films, slides, etc.	63	84.0
Trade books (library)	61	81.3
TV	39	52.0
Magazines	36	48.0
Programed tests	17	22.6

Nearly half of the respondents reported that research had been done on the effectiveness of the nongraded plan in their schools or school systems. The research centered around achievement test scores. Participants in the study were not asked for results of their research.

The advantages or strengths reported emphasize improved mental health for teachers and pupils, continuous progress for the individual according to his needs and abilities, and a better program of individualized instruction with increased instructional efficiency. Improved teacher relationships, staff morale, and excellent over-all atmosphere are also noted. Professional growth for teachers and administrators is stimulated, and a healthy atmosphere of experimentation is promoted. Better parent and school rapport is also indicated. Over half of the respondents to the questionnaire reported much improvement in the mastery of basic skills. More than 50 per cent of the responses indicated much strengthening in the following areas: analysis of social, emotional, and personal problems of the student; individualizing instruction; evaluation; reporting to parents; variety of instructional materials used; teamwork on the part of the staff; and mastery of basic skills.

The biggest problem seems to be the lack of understanding and acceptance of the concepts of nongrading by teachers, parents, and principals. Closely related to this is the persistent use of "graded" terminology in the vocabulary of teachers, students, and parents. The continuous need for orientation of new staff and parents often poses a problem. It is noted that grouping problems appear to be related to homogeneous or ability grouping. More work is required of teachers and principals. Problems related to evaluation, reporting to parents, and transfer are also reported. The danger of levels becoming as rigid as grades is noted.

The necessity for at least a year of study and careful planning in preparation for changing to the nongraded structure was emphasized repeatedly. The understanding and acceptance of the nongraded philosophy and concepts by all concerned—parents, teachers, administrators, and children—is an important factor for success. The degree of flexibility and the degree of adaptability are often factors.

In summary, the survey showed that the basic pattern of horizontal grouping is the self-contained classroom or some type of semi-departmentalization. Students are assigned to classrooms by a plethora of factors, with reading achievement being the number one factor. Most of the respondents indicated that some form of ability grouping is used. (It is interesting to note that ability grouping is also listed as one of the chief problems of the nongraded school. Children change classrooms each year and very few changes are made in interclass grouping during the year.)

All the respondents reported the use of skills checklists or levels checklists to record the progress of individual pupils. Progress was reported to parents by conference and report cards, but only about one-quarter of the respondents indicated methods of reporting to pupils.

Some curriculum improvement is going on in the schools. Many instructional materials are being used, but the basal textbook is still the most extensively used instructional item.

As indicated earlier, there is much expressed interest in the philosophy of the nongraded school, and many schools are moving toward nongradedness.

The results of this survey, however, point out that most schools labeled nongraded are still in a transitional period between the graded school and the nongraded school.

NEW BOOKS

HAROLD J. McNALLY
Book Review Editor

SO IT'S NOT GRADED, BUT WHAT IS IT?

Nongrading in the Elementary School. John L. Tewksbury. Columbus, Ohio, Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1967. 138 pp. $3.95 (cloth). $1.95 (paper).

The Nongraded Primary School. Lillian Glogau and Murray Fessel. West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Company, Inc., 1967. 294 pp. $7.95.

Of the numerous proposals that have gained popularity in today's educational ferment, probably none has been more talked about and written about than "nongrading." It is likely, also, that none has been more misunderstood. In the first place, "nongrading" is a negative term; it tells us what a school is *not* without telling us what it *is*. Second, for these hundred and more years, we have become so accustomed to graded schools that many of us find it difficult indeed to grasp a different conceptualization of organizing and teaching. To call the vast majority of today's American schools "graded" is to be only partially correct. Yet it appears that large numbers of teachers, principals, and superintendents don't know that this is so; many apparently don't know what is meant by a truly graded school. Consequently, with lack of understanding of what gradedness really means, there is much confusion about what *non*grading means, or looks like in operation.

Undoubtedly, the book which has done the most to popularize the nongraded idea is *The Nongraded Elementary School,* by John Goodlad and Robert Anderson. In it, those authors did a splendid job of setting forth the groundwork of research and theory supporting their advocacy of the nongraded school. They also explained well what nongrading is. Yet both these authors have observed ruefully that their conception of the nongraded school has been misinterpreted and superficially applied in large numbers of schools which claim to have nongraded programs. As DiLorenzo and Salter[1] observe, many schools which claim to have become nongraded have made little more than token changes, such as dropping grade labels and using different terminology to describe an organization, curriculum, and teaching plan that hasn't really changed in its basic characteristics. Then, too, in the thinking of many, there seems to be confusion among the concepts of nongrading, team teaching, homogeneous grouping and "tracking," and the like. Are these related or aren't they? If they are related, how are they related?

Two books have recently appeared that can help clarify some of this confusion. In *Nongrading in the Elementary School,* Tewksbury spells out chapter, and some "verse," in the form of illustrations of varieties of applications of nongradedness. He explains the difference between his book and that of Goodlad and Anderson by saying, "Their book differs from this one in that this author has focused on specific operational procedures in nongraded programs and furnished examples that are in addition to those available elsewhere."

The first two chapters discuss the meaning of nongradedness and the way the idea of nongradedness has developed. They cover sketchily much of the same ground Goodlad and Anderson, and others, have explored more adequately. It is made clear that nongrading is an *idea,* not an organizational plan, and that it can operate within various organizational frameworks, such as self-

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[1] DiLorenzo, L. T., and Salter, R. "Cooperative Research on the Nongraded Primary." *Elementary School Journal* 45: 269-77; February 1965.

contained classrooms, departmentalized classes, team teaching organizations, homogeneous grouping, or some combination of these. The chief value of the book, however, lies in the remaining four chapters: "Teaching Procedures in a Nongraded Program," "The Levels Plan of Organization in Nongraded Schools," "Assigning Children to Teachers in Nongraded Schools," and "A Report Form for Nongraded Schools."

In the chapter on teaching procedures, the author states that two categories of teaching plans are needed. One is "multi-level instruction," the other is "whole class instruction." This doesn't sound much different from what is done in many well-taught "graded" classrooms, and the author admits that this is so. He suggests that there are degrees of gradedness and nongradedness which shade into each other and that they might be placed on a scale ranging from "pure" gradedness (almost nonexistent) to "pure" nongradedness (also probably nonexistent). Varieties of multi-level instruction and whole-class instruction that would be characteristic of an ungraded program are described. The author rightly points out that, "For a nongraded program to be thoroughly implemented, it is essential that the school system provide the materials the teacher will need to conduct multi-level instruction. . . . It is entirely unreasonable to expect teachers to assume the added burden of multi-level instruction without the necessary materials to do so." The place and shortcomings of programed instructional materials are also discussed briefly.

This chapter would have profited from a bit more "verse," in the form of more specifics. Although the author suggests types of variations in instruction, it would have been helpful to have had a number of illustrations from operating programs, to help the uninitiate understand better how these variations look in practice. This is not easy to do, of course, which is all the more reason why it should be done; most teachers find it difficult to envision what nongraded teaching looks like in practice, and the author's stated objective is to furnish examples of "specific operational procedures."

The chapter on "Assigning Children to Teachers" is a most interesting one. With the use of diagrams, Tewksbury first sets forth a graded plan. Then, in five subsequent diagrams he illustrates how nongrading might operate with 1) self-contained, heterogeneously grouped classes, 2) self-contained classes grouped somewhat on the basis of achievement level, 3) self-contained classes grouped "homogeneously" on the basis of reading achievement, 4) self-contained interage classes grouped somewhat on the basis of achievement level, and 5) self-contained interage classes with "full (homogeneous) interclassroom achievement grouping." The chapter also describes how nongrading might work in team teaching, or in departmentalized types of organization. The author is careful to stress that he did not mean to suggest that a particular plan for nongrading represents the most desirable type of program. The chief value of his presentation in this chapter is to stress that nongrading is not *a plan* of organization but is an approach to the education of children that can be employed within a variety of organizational plans.

The final chapter presents a plan for reporting pupil progress to parents. Again, it is not presented as the report form to be used (although one can predict that some unimaginative school personnel will adopt it uncritically). Rather, it is an attempt to give one illustration of a means of reporting that is consistent with the idea of nongraded teaching and learning.

The author states in a couple of places that we must be careful not to restrict our conception of nongrading to the dimension of *rate* of progress. Nevertheless, the weight of the book's stress is on this very thing. This is one of the traps that must be guarded against carefully in developing nongraded programs. Although the word "curriculum" comes from the Latin, meaning "the course to be run," education most emphatically should not be merely a competitive race through a carefully pre-planned factual or intellectual obstacle course. I would hope that we would conceive of growth as a kind of "flowering"—of multidimensional developing—rather than as prodding children to run headlong through a "curriculum" to . . . where? One virtue of the nongraded idea is that in schools in which it is validly developed, teachers are encouraged to help each child to flower—to develop and grow—at a rate and in a manner appropriate to his circumstances, his endowments, his nature. Any combination of organizational plan, curriculum formulation, or teaching procedure that really does this is by definition "ungraded."

Glogau and Fessel's *The Nongraded Primary School* is an almost blow-by-blow account of how the staff of the Old Bethpage Primary School on Long Island, New York, developed a nongraded primary program. "Our first purpose," they state, "is to show you why we feel that nongrading is a successful operational pattern for elementary schools . . . . our second purpose [is to enable you] to read the actual day by day, week by week, month by month account of what actually took place during the school year with children, teachers, administrators, and parents. This is how it really happened." Included are excerpts from minutes of meetings, thumbnail descriptions of individual children, and discussions of some of the problems the staff encountered.

In the first few chapters, the authors explain the manner in which 442 primary level children were assigned to 17 class groups and give reasons for individual pupil placements. These chapters illustrate very well the advantages of the nongraded approach in terms of the flexibility it affords in assigning and moving children. "As soon as we eliminated the age and grade factors," say the authors, "we found we could group our pupils in classes which were much better suited to their learning needs than in the past when we were bound by artificial and meaningless restrictions of grade or age." The discussion, with its descriptions of individual children's characteristics and its "you are there" report of how these were taken into account in pupil placement and within-the-year reassignment, conveys more tellingly than Tewksbury's book the *personal* aspects of pupil grouping and progress. It comes through clearly that this staff was concerned not only with individual differences in learning achievement and potential but also with the differences among their pupils as *persons*. The account conveys a sincere effort to suit programs to individual persons, rather than the too prevalent converse. These chapters deal with what Tewksbury discussed in his chapter on "Assigning Children to Teachers," but in a different way.

In chapters 6 and 7, the authors explain how the Old Bethpage staff handled the problem of curricular sequence. It is essentially the "levels" plan described by Tewksbury, spelled out in more specific detail. Twelve levels are identified in reading and ten in arithmetic. A start was made in developing sequences in the content areas. For lack of any other widely understood referents, these levels are explained in terms of the traditional grade level equivalents. It is made abundantly clear, however, that in practice they are not treated as grade level equivalents but as frameworks to help in identifying progress, pacing learning, and developing programs suitable to individual differences.

In other chapters, the authors discuss other problems and procedures involved in developing their nongraded program. One chapter is devoted to "Children Who Learn Slowly," and one to "Children Who Learn Quickly." Although the terminology seems to reflect the usual bemusement with *rate* of learning, the descriptions reveal clearly that other growth factors were taken into account. One is impressed with the care with which the children were studied and their learning characteristics analyzed.

An entire chapter is given over to describing the reasons and the procedures for deciding whether a youngster should remain two, three, or four years in the primary school program. This is a question that is raised repeatedly about nongraded programs.

The final two chapters are discussions of "internal" and "external" problems which were encountered in the development of the program. These discussions are more frank than usual in telling about stumbling blocks. As one reads accounts of innovations in other schools, one is often moved to ask incredulously, "Didn't *anything* ever go wrong? Were there never *any* 'hitches'?" Glogau and Fessel admit that there were. The "internal" problems were chiefly the problems a teaching staff is bound to have when any truly basic change in the instructional program is attempted. They included teacher insecurity, resistance and tension, finding time for planning meetings, and teachers who just couldn't make the change. With respect to the latter, the authors candidly state, "It is our firm conviction that there are certain teachers . . . who cannot make the adjustment to the philosophy and requirements of nongraded teaching. . . . The pressures are too intense for them to handle, and they will protect themselves by leaving the nongraded school, without any effort on the administrators' part. This is fortunate, because these teachers are good people and it is hard watching them attempt an adjustment of which they are incapable." They also mention the rift that developed between the "regular" teachers who were intimately involved in planning and carrying out the daily nongraded program and the specialized teachers who did not have the opportunity to participate in the meetings during the program's development. This discussion serves to emphasize the importance of *involvement in the planning* on the part of those who are to work in the changed program.

The "external" problems were predominantly of three types. First was the problem of follow-up, of what happens to children when they leave the nongraded primary and enter the fourth grade of a graded intermediate unit. Since the program described by Glogau and Fessel was only in its first year, this is a problem still to be dealt with.

A second problem was time. "The one factor which we consistently ran into during our first year was the woefully inadequate amount of time which we had been granted to establish the ungraded." (sic) When will we stop demanding "instant change" in fundamental aspects of education?

The third problem was, in a word, parents. The school in which the program described was developed is in a residential suburb of New York City, with an upward mobile, middle-class clientele, 20 per cent of whom have a college background, and most of whom want their children to go to college. Many of these consider kindergarten to be the first year of a college preparation program. The excessive concern of these parents for their children's academic achievement was a source of considerable difficulty, requiring much reassurance and many individual conferences with anxious parents.

Unfortunately, the book suffers from grammatical errors and poor phrasing which should have been corrected by the editor. This should not, however, obscure the value of the account for the practitioner.

The Appendix contains reproductions of materials that should be helpful to any who undertake the development and operation of this type of nongraded program. The levels analysis for reading is presented in nine pages. The scope and sequence chart for social studies is included, along with "Social Studies Skills: A Guide to Analysis and Grade Placement," by Eunice Johns and Dorothy M. Fraser, and examples of social studies units. There are examples of newsletters sent to parents, a guide to "The Art of Conducting Parent-Teacher Conferences," the report to parents forms that were developed, and a guide to homework policy.

Even though neither of these volumes is a literary gem, there is much of value in them. The practical, down-to-earth dealing with the "nuts and bolts" of changing to a nongraded form of teaching and learning program should be helpful to teachers and administrators who have embarked, or are about to, on a program designed to develop a nongraded approach to the education of children. Much of the superficiality which characterizes many so-called "nongraded programs" stems from abysmal lack of understanding of 1) how great a change nongrading really is, and 2) how difficult and time-consuming it is to make such a change.

One does not just "institute" a nongraded program. First, the staff and community have to accept the idea that it is desirable to make such a change. Second, the staff needs much time to study what the change really is, and what it involves, for it has a multitude of ramifications. This requires changes in the staff members themselves: their beliefs, their insights and understandings about children, learning, gradedness and ungradedness, evaluation, diagnostic teaching, and much more. Third, it means careful development of the curriculum content and sequence compatible with nongrading, the acquisition or preparation of materials suitable or necessary to such a program, the development of evaluation and reporting practices divorced from the framework of gradedness, and the painful learning of new teaching behaviors that result in truly individualized instruction and continuous progress in learning on the part of children.

The problem we are coping with is as old as organized education itself. It is the problem of coping with the wide variation of individual differences among children, of providing individualized education within the framework of a mass education system. We have never really demonstrated that this is possible on a large scale, although I am convinced that it is, given the proper resources and conditions. These two books are glimmers of light to help us see our way toward the solution of the problem. They help us see what a nongraded school is *not* and also what it *is*.

Nongraded Schools in Action: Bold New Venture. Edited by David W. Beggs, III, and Edward G. Buffie. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1967. 270 pp. $5.95.

Informative, thought-provoking, and candid, this addition to the growing bibliography on the nongraded school offers a rationale of its philosophy and indicates a strategy for its development. Highlighting the critical need for schools to "leap from theory to practice in individualizing instruction," the editors point out the necessity of rethinking and recasting the present organizational scheme. Frankly prejudiced, they view the nongraded concept as a new partner for American education, a way to meet the demand of this era for quality instruction, and a means of escape from the organizational shackles which inhibit individual development and personal progress.

This volume is part of the *Bold New Venture Series,* which explores new ideas and departures on the education scene. Reflecting the thinking of many scholars and practitioners, it encompasses the significant findings of research and the practical wisdom distilled from classroom experimentation.

The study is divided into two sections. Part I discusses the philosophical and psychological foundations of the nongraded concept, considers its potentialities, indicates the organizational stepping-stones to nongradedness, and differentiates between the practical reality of immediate nongrading and the ultimate nongrading ideal.

In an informative chapter, Buffie traces the historical development of elementary school organization and lists the many unsuccessful efforts to modify the instructional program within the framework of the graded school. He notes that, by the nature of its lockstep pattern and rigid structure, the graded school is not in harmony with the basic purpose of American education or the accumulated knowledge of child development and learning, and depicts the nongraded movement as a basic reaction to graded school education.

Maurie Hillson presents the nongraded school as a dynamic structure which more realistically fulfills the requirements of the space age. He points out that its philosophy is pragmatic and rooted in the scientific and child-centered movements of the past three decades. He views nongradedness as "a plan that considers the variations in learning, the aspects of cognition, the spurts and lags which typify the process of learning, and progress within the realm of reality."

Beggs analyzes the recent developments of the nongraded movement at the secondary school level and gives a theoretical description of a nongraded secondary school. In marshalling support, he states that the nongraded high school places emphasis on individual teaching techniques, makes the student more responsible for his learning, and provides more time for independent study. Dr. Beggs considers team teaching and flexible scheduling as priority items in the list of requirements for the nongraded high school and believes that it "will fade into oblivion if a change in the existing teaching methodology does not accompany its introduction." He recommends that secondary school teachers adopt the methods of competent elementary school teachers, a suggestion which the reviewer feels has something to offer, irrespective of the organizational pattern of the school.

In a provocative examination of the future of nongraded schools, Stuart E. Dean identifies the practices which could cause the movement to fail; he cautions against blind faith in nongrading as an organizational technique and against extravagant claims with reference to its effect on educational practices. He expresses his conviction that the potentialities inherent in the nongraded type of school organization are "minimally promising and maximally assuring." He notes that the greatest potential of nongradedness may be in the realm of curriculum development and breakthrough.

Other chapters by Roy A. Larmee and Robert J. Garvue focus on the process by which a typical graded school may be ungraded and on the need for internal research and evaluation of the nongraded school.

Part II discards generalizations for brief but incisive sketches of nongraded schools in action. Included are thirteen descriptions of nongraded primary, elementary, and secondary school programs in affluent, average, and disadvantaged communities. Emphasizing the *how to* approach, the capsule accounts provide practical advice on procedures of nongrading, and expose pitfalls.

While no two accounts are exactly alike except in a basic philosophy of individual differences, there are recurring themes. The reports convey the impression that the development of a nongraded school program is not a simple task; it is the result of serious thinking and hard work at a high level of professional competency.

Many of the contributors stress the need for systematic investigation, study, and planning prior to inauguration; pervasive communication with all staff members; orienting new teachers to the program's philosophy, providing continuing in-service education for all teachers; involving parents and community; and building in procedures for assessing the effectiveness of the program. Several stress the affective benefits that result from nongrading; they point out that learning is enhanced when each child is placed in a situation in which success is attainable. Others express the opinion that since the nongrading organization stimulates professional conversations between all teachers in the instructional network, team teaching and nongradedness will become increasingly interrelated in the future.

Most of the writers point out that their programs are neither fully nor finally developed. Their programs have undergone countless changes and refinements since their inception. They seem to feel that they are emerging from the cocoon stage and only beginning to take advantage of the opportunities created by nongrading.

While the volume covers some of the ground already plowed by John Goodlad and Robert Anderson and others and although the chapters are somewhat repetitious and of uneven merit, it provides an excellent background for the student wishing to broaden his perspective and increase his understanding of the nongraded school. It presents a plan of action for the staff interested in introducing such a program, and serves as a yardstick against which a nongraded school can measure its effectiveness. Emphasizing his responsibility as the pivot on which the program's inauguration will depend, it challenges the building principal to serve as an agent of change and to assume a critical role as planner, facilitator, stimulator, and appraiser.

The text is enriched with figures and charts which summarize and clarify the content. Appendices containing sample progress reports, conference forms, and student schedules, a selected bibliography, notes, and an index contribute to the value of the work.

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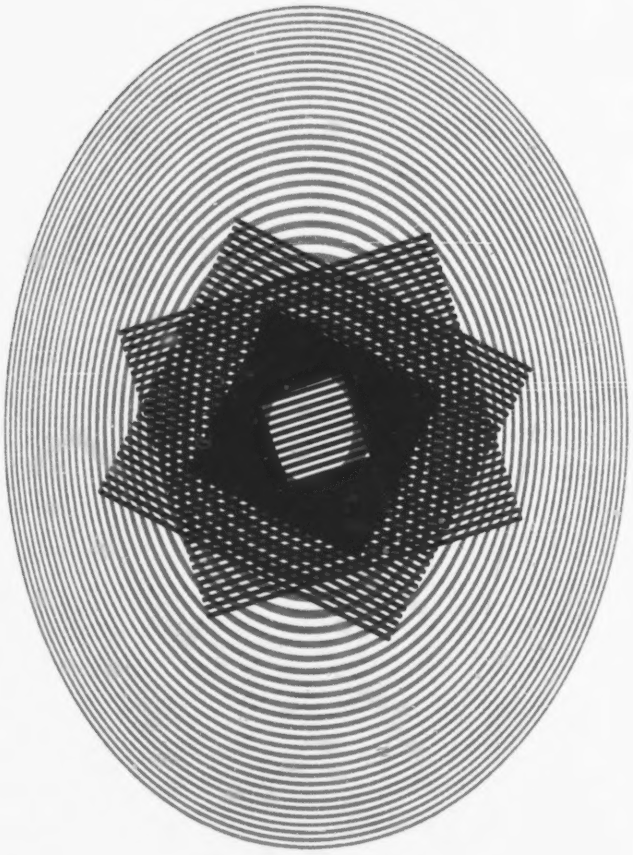

PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS FOR NONGRADED SCHOOLS

Pre-Service and In-Service Education

ALBERT H. SHUSTER

THE extent to which the American educational reform movement will make inroads into communities beyond the more favored suburbs will, no doubt, depend upon many factors. Two of these factors are: the kind and quality of preparation of elementary school teachers and principals, and the kind and quality of in-service education programs.

If our national goal of excellence in education is going to be achieved, it is essential that we understand what we are talking about. We are not talking about excellence in programs for certain selected children; we are talking about excellence in programs for *all* of America's children.

Many authorities across the country who have supported the educational reform movement have envisioned that the nongraded school, K-12, will best contribute to equal educational opportunity and excellence in education for all youngsters. If such a dramatic educational change is to come about, then the direction we must take is clear, but the goal will not easily be attained. We, the nation's teachers, principals, and adult population in general, have, for the most part, been educated in self-contained classrooms in graded elementary schools and in departmentalized junior and senior high schools. Coming from such a traditional educational background makes it somewhat difficult for us to comprehend all of the facets which will require change in order to

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bring about a truly nongraded school. However, new organizational designs, new curriculum structures, and new understandings of children and how they learn, as well as an appreciation of the changing role of the teacher, are now proposed as a means of improving education. The momentum for such a change is under way. To increase this momentum we shall need bold new programs of teacher education and significant approaches toward easing current problems which exist in in-service education.

Teacher education programs traditionally have consisted primarily of a series of courses called "general education" (courses deemed essential for all students), a series of courses in the professional education field, and a series of courses leading to some area of specialization.

Any program for the improvement of teacher education specifically planned for teachers in nongraded schools is not going to be materially affected by adding another year of college course work to the present four-year program, as some sources are suggesting. There is little or no evidence to indicate that one more year of preparation—if it is just more of the same—is going to make any difference in the ability of teachers who are going out of institutions of higher learning to teach in modern schools.

Some have suggested that what is needed is a year of internship, where the teacher is placed in a selected school for a fifth year of training. But will the internship make any difference if the teacher's preparation is as traditional as it is in most colleges and universities, and will it make any difference if he is placed in a school where every effort is being made to maintain the status quo?

We are living in a modern, technological society, and the problems in this society are becoming increasingly more complex. The teacher's role is changing rapidly and will continue to be modified as additional technological advancements are made and as curriculum planning centers (both within our schools and outside our schools) influence new developments. The professional educator—teacher, administrator, or college professor—is faced with competing new programs of instruction. Both the professional and general education preparation of the teacher must be radically changed if we are going to achieve the goals of the nongraded schools.

Pre-service teachers must become knowledgeable about the recent developments in curriculum which emphasize content, methods of inquiry, processes, skills, and attitudes as related to each discipline. The approach of utilitarian application to everyday problems outside of the disciplines is not found in many of the newer programs. Teachers will need considerable depth of understanding of each discipline, particularly of the structure of the disciplines, if they are to share in planning curriculum as well as teaching. The modern mathematics program and the modern science programs are representative of such curriculum development, but even in the development of these programs crude in-service techniques are sometimes used. In one project, teachers were required to view TV at six o'clock in the morning in order to stay abreast of understandings in mathematics.

The underlying principle in these curriculum designs is that the student selects a basic unit and studies it in depth, developing the fundamental learnings essential to further learnings in the selected discipline. In far too many instances at the college level, students are still learning isolated facts or bits of knowledge without ever grasping the basic ideas within the discipline, or its methodology. It is hoped, therefore, that the vast educational reform movement which is taking place in the public schools will also take place in the various disciplines at the college and university level. Since considerable direction has already come from scholars in the disciplines, it is hoped that this emphasis will be evidenced in college courses.

In addition to providing ways for pre-service teachers to learn about new concepts of curriculum, individualized instruction, flexible school organization, cooperative teaching, new systems of evaluating pupil progress, and the like, ways must be found for these prospective teachers to experience the essential ingredients of the nongraded school. Some colleges and universities have initiated programs wherein students may enroll in courses on a "pass-fail" basis. Independent study programs and other programs which recognize individual differences at the college level are prevalent in some institutions of higher learning, but most of these are for advanced students. Such programs tend to support change in the traditional system by providing the pre-service teacher with practical experience in a few aspects of nongradedness at the college level.

Inasmuch as the nongraded school philosophy recognizes that students learn at different rates (that is, all children are not expected to complete a learning task at the same time, but each child should have the opportunity to complete his learning task at his own learning rate), then is it not conceivable that teacher education programs could also operate on this same premise? Is it necessary that all students who enter a four-year teacher education program complete the program in four years? Such an assumption does not recognize differences in individuals. Is it not reasonable to expect that some individuals might complete this program in three years, while others might require four, five, or even six years before acquiring the minimum competencies needed for teaching? It might be at this point that we should attempt to 1) define with each person in the pre-service program the kind of role for which his interests and competencies are best suited, and 2) take account of the kinds of experiences he brings with him as a college student.

In-Service Education

The principal, long recognized as the instructional leader of the school, is the administrator who carries the major responsibility for in-service education for his staff. In establishing in-service education for his staff, however, he should be cognizant of the vast differences in the individuals who compose his teaching staff and the competencies which they possess.

It is not my intention to deal with all the well-known in-service devices such as the conference, the university course, workshops, institutes, and the like. While all of these are useful techniques, they have been sufficiently covered in numerous other sources. Instead, let us explore the possibilities of a combined pre-service-in-service cooperative effort between universities and public schools to bring about desired change in instructional programs at both levels.

In-service education for the teacher. In-service education programs directed toward developing the nongraded school must permit teachers to grapple with the problems essential to producing change in such schools when pertinent questions are raised. For instance, what about the child who has finished the second reader before the Christmas holidays, or the child who is ready to read the first day of the first grade? What answer should be given to the teacher who remarks that Johnny should have been retained in the fifth grade because he is too immature to be promoted to the sixth?

The wise principal recognizes that these and other problems can no longer be dealt with in the traditional manner. New information concerning learning, curriculum structure, and child growth and development must be utilized in solving these problems in an objective way. In-service education, then, should not attempt to force each teacher into the same mold but should provide for developing teacher competencies in dealing with instructional problems and teaching strategies at each teacher's own level of sophistication.

Also of importance at the in-service level of continuing teacher education is the basic fact that teachers need time to "retool." Industry would not think of producing a new commodity requiring the use of a new tool or a different operation on the assembly line without reorienting those who were to perform these new tasks. Yet very often no time is allowed for the task of reorienting teachers to a new philosophical understanding of a changing school organization and developing new competencies in instructional procedures. Teachers simply are expected to extend their working hours for this purpose. Although it is hoped that teachers will not tie themselves to the clock in the current emphasis on professional negotiation, it should also be recognized that administrators should be concerned about the mental health of their teachers and should not expect them to put in long hours after the regular school day is over. Increased funds for extending the school year, as well as funds for releasing teachers from regular classroom assignments for in-service education, are not only justified but are also essential to accomplishing the task of helping teachers to redefine their roles in the process of developing the best educational program for children.

In-service education for the principal. The search continues for the best means to prepare individuals to provide educational leadership for our schools. But the fact is that we have not come up with any research which clearly tells us how to produce the type of creative, dynamic leadership which the elementary principalship demands. The list of things we know *won't* produce a quality preparation program is longer than the list of things we know *will* produce such a program.

The in-service principal will need to acquire an understanding of the philosophy of nongrading which, in fact, we might even hope that he has exhibited by the way in which he works with teachers. That is, he is cognizant of the individual differences of his staff. Therefore, he helps them to identify their specific needs and seeks to have them adopt in-service techniques that are appropriate for meeting these needs. He doesn't force all teachers into the same in-service mold.

The principal should provide the kind of working environment which challenges teachers to look at school improvement objectively. Change will not take place in a closed atmosphere. Openness should prevail between faculty and the administration. While the principal should see that the climate is open, he should also be astute enough to challenge suggestions with sound alternatives, thus provoking deeper insights into the purposes for change.

For approximately ten years, conferences for educational leaders have been held at Ohio University and other institutions with which I am acquainted. These conferences have been built around some innovative topic such as nongrading or team teaching. The conferences were primarily concerned with helping educational leaders to come in contact with the nation's foremost authorities on these topics. This in-service device brought university consultants and public school resource persons together in face-to-face sessions with principals, teachers, and curriculum workers. In more recent years, the Kettering Foundation, under I/D/E/A and other groups, has sponsored programs to help school leaders gain an understanding of the various innovations—the middle school, team teaching, and the like. The Harvard-Lexington program is well known for its in-service training of team teachers in actual situations. But such programs serve basically as springboards for starting the principal to think about changing school organization and changing educational programs. There is a need for less structured training programs for principals with an emphasis on relating theory and practice in the school setting. This means a departure from the usual college classroom lecture type of instruction to more emphasis on inquiry in seeking solutions to problems that require change.

I know two young principals in Lexington, Kentucky, who served a one-year internship before taking over the leadership role, each in a new school. These interns worked with various central office personnel as well as with other principals. They interviewed candidates and assisted in the selection of staff for their new nongraded schools. They worked on curriculum and planned for the first year's in-service education program to prepare teachers for implementing a team-taught nongraded program. While many consultants were used in this program, it was not related to a graduate school. Such a program would, however, be very helpful both to other graduate students preparing to be principals and to a university staff. The experiences of these two principals could probably have been mutually beneficial to a cooperating university and to the school. The point is that universities and public schools need to get together so that such a relationship can be established. At the same university, credit could be granted for the internship experiences, and this would place more emphasis on experiences and seminars on-the-site to complement campus courses. This is only to suggest that educational leaders in public schools and universities could profit from a cooperative endeavor which might lead to improved graduate preparation programs for elementary principals and thus better trained personnel for the schools.

Principals need to build for themselves, through conferences, inter-school visitation, reading, college seminars, and so forth, a background of understanding of the nongraded school so they can provide the necessary leadership for their staffs and for the community. One of the goals of nongrading is that of teaching the students to program their own learning activities. The principal, too, must program his own learning so that he can give direction to his community and his staff. Good principals will never be accused of standing on the steps of their schools to see which way the crowd is going. Instead, you'll find them out in front leading the crowd.

University-Public School Cooperation

To enhance teacher education programs, the public school and university personnel must have new and deeper understanding of each other's role in the preparation of teachers. Some authorities have voiced the opinion that up to 80 per cent of the public school teacher's professional preparation should be accomplished in the public school, that the public school should be the laboratory where pre-service teachers are in continuous contact with experienced teachers, with principals, and with children. Perhaps what is needed, then, is cooperation in the development of university-public school centers. In such centers pre-service teachers would spend certain periods of time developing some previously identified teaching competencies. It is not possible, for obvious reasons, for all teachers to be placed in "lighthouse" type schools where the very best facilities and the most recent innovations are in preparation or in operation. But pre-service and in-service teachers might be selected on the basis of their level of development and matched with school assignments where maximum growth could be expected in relation to their professional sophistication.

If colleges and universities work closely with the public schools in the preparation of teachers, then it would seem possible to upgrade the critical competencies of in-service teachers and at the same time provide an invaluable experience for pre-service teachers—in other words, provide a combination pre-service-in-service program. The essential point here is that if critical issues are dealt with in the schools (regardless of the school's stage of development) the direction would be toward nongradedness; the inquiry method would be employed in seminars or in-service staff meetings where the combined thinking of principals, in-service and pre-service teachers, and college professors should resolve the issues. Such a situation would provide the pre-service teacher with a fundamental understanding of the problems with which teachers are confronted in addition to helping him to see the need for change in our schools. Also, in such centers, the cooperative efforts of the university staff, teachers, principals, and students could deal with a host of problems and concepts which would further the school's program development and, at the same time, broaden the experience of the college staff and pre-service teachers.

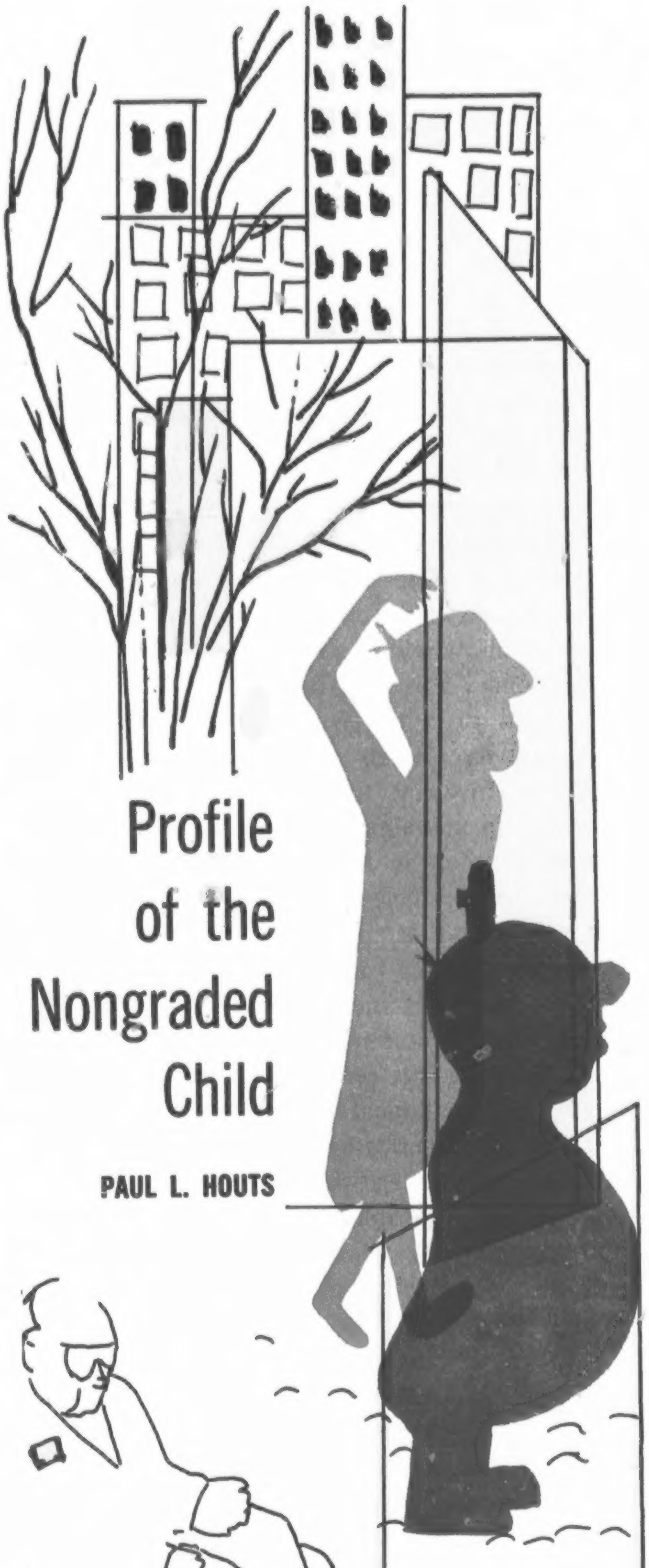
College professors working in such situations would soon see the need for modifying their own approaches toward instructional responsibilities with the desired result that pre-service teachers might be instructed in the same manner, using the same concepts, methods, technology, and the like, which they would be expected to use when they move out to teach in the modern, dynamic, nongraded school.

Furthermore, such centers would provide the opportunity for university professors, pre-service teachers, and the regular teaching staff in the public schools to understand teacher teamwork and to develop a functional understanding of flexibility and utilization of the teaching staff. For example, a group of participating students who are developing their skills and understandings concerning the teaching of mathematics would work with their professors and with public school teachers. Under these circumstances, the participating students would have a variety of resources and experiences accessible to them as they work with a child or with groups of children in a learning activity. When a question is raised, for instance, as to what to do with a child who has excelled in mathematics to the point of being far ahead of others in the group, the whole team could zero in on suggesting the best approach—or approaches—that might be used for this particular child, and for other children as well who do not learn at the "average" rate. Under such conditions, communication becomes important; thus the pre-service teacher will learn something of the educational language and the problems of communication among teachers, administrators, and college professors while dealing with the basic philosophical questions related to what individualizing instruction really means. Such experiences would enhance further learning when the students return to the college campus.

If the educational reform movement is going to have any significant impact on America's public schools, then it seems imperative that educational leaders—whether they be superintendents, principals, teachers, or college professors—be willing to join forces in developing such in-service education centers. No school system needs to be excluded because it lacks resources or the finest facilities available. The important point is that the public schools and the universities agree to assist each other in developing a new, dynamic, on-going program for the improvement of teacher education and educational opportunities for all children.

Profile of the Nongraded Child

PAUL L. HOUTS



at the Hotel of the New World

THE nongraded child was in town last week, and sensing adventure, we washed the printer's ink from our hands, ironed a last paragraph, and set forth up the avenue to have a visit. It was a bright winter's morning, with a sparkle borne of the previous evening's snowstorm, and a promise in the air of high spirits and high jinks. Even our taxi driver, who bore a striking resemblance to Everett Dirksen, seemed caught up in an expansive mood and pontificated on a variety of educational subjects: a child-centered curriculum ("give 'em what they need, and if they don't want it, beat it into 'em"), higher education ("better not clutter up their minds too much"), and nongradedness ("sounds dangerous to me").

During a lapse in conversation, we settled back in the cab and reflected on our own state of affairs. We belonged to the *Nondescript Generation*—a generation too young to be condemned and too old to fill anyone with very much hope or inspiration. We were a child of the 30's, graded, raised in a self-contained classroom, and currently rather flabby of elbow and slack of jaw. Suddenly, we felt tired and a little dismayed at the prospects of facing precociousness so early in the morning. Before depression completely caught us, however, the taxi lurched to a stop and we paid our fare, exchanging a few final pleasantries with our driver about the TEPS Year of the Non-Conference.

The nongraded child was staying at the Hotel of the New World, and after some difficulty with the desk clerk over the room number (there was none, we were told), we found our way to his suite through a labyrinth of corridors, occasionally encountering trays of half-eaten grapefruit and silver coffee pots. We were met at the door by a pleasant, ample woman, who introduced herself as Pi's mother. She told us Pi was resting but that he would be with us shortly. In the meantime, seizing at some small talk, we asked how she liked the hotel.

"It's all right, I suppose, perhaps a little stark. But then that's very much the style these days, isn't it? I've always been rather fond myself of the way hotels used to be—you know, filled with

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a great deal of faded Louis Quinze furniture and French ormolu clocks. It always gave me such a lovely sense of wickedness, which is really hard to feel these days, no matter what you do. Wouldn't you say so?"

We weren't quite certain what a "lovely sense of wickedness" was, but we nodded politely and went on to ask something about the nongraded child's background. She told us that he had been born during an afternoon lecture at the University of Chicago and had lived for periods of time in Florida, California, and most recently in the New England States. Before she could fill us in on more details, the nongraded child appeared and Mrs. Delta politely excused herself.

At first glance, the nongraded child looked to us very much like any other child. He appeared to be about eleven years old, approximately four and a half feet tall, with blond hair, brown eyes, and a rather distinctly sleepy air, as if he were stunned by, but still disinclined to adjust to, the sudden brightness of the room. We later noticed only one striking mannerism—a tendency during any lapse in conversation to lift his right index finger into the air as if vaguely searching out the direction of the wind. It was a nautical gesture, fully imbued with a fine sense of derring-do.

Young Mister Delta shook hands and asked us to have a seat. He apologized for his attire—a pair of ski pajamas—but explained that he'd been travelling and feeling somewhat out-of-sorts after the plane trip.

"I've been lecturing at the University of Portugal," he further explained, by this time becoming fully alert, "and only arrived late last night. They've been coming up with some very exciting things there, relating the entire development of communication to an anthropological framework. They kindly asked me to come over and give some of my ideas on the subject, and of course I was only too happy to. But there's a great difference in the way of life between Coimbra and the Hotel of the New World, and it's all been something of a strain coming back and having to face so many newspaper reporters and educators. There was a Mr. Hechinger here until almost dawn asking me a good many questions, and then early this morning a Sheila Graham who wanted to know if there was a nongraded girl in my life, which of course is a little ridiculous since I haven't even reached puberty yet. And then just a moment ago, Ole Sand called to ask if I might work with him on a book about the child of the 70's."

We ventured that all of this must be exciting for a boy his age.

"Well, it is, and it isn't. More and more, I get to feeling that it's a case of misrepresentation. You see, I'm not really a *typical* nongraded child. If you really want to know a typical nongraded child, you should talk to Fatty Watson or Schuyler Tiller. They're far more typical. All in all, I guess you might say I was an *accident*."

We asked him what he meant by that, and how indeed he came to be a nongraded child.

"Actually, I started out as a very ordinary child who went to a very ordinary school. It was one of those places where bells rang periodically and every class had its own teacher and there weren't any carpets on the floor. We had one library, one librarian, and a principal who looked a bit like an owl. In a way, it was all rather nondescript. But I suppose you could say I was reasonably happy. In any case, I more or less chugged along, a little bored at times but still doing the work pretty much as it was thrown at me. Once they tested me, and my parents later told me I was considered *normal-bright* and that *normal-bright* was a fine thing to be. Then one day, quite out of the blue (at least as far as I was concerned), Goodlad and Anderson arrived at the school, ungraded the whole place, and before anyone—including me—knew what was happening, I began to just zoom along. Really, things got quite out of hand."

"In what way?" we asked, by now thoroughly feeling we had lost touch with reality.

"As you know, the whole idea of nongradedness is to allow each child to progress at his own rate. The trouble was no one expected me to progress quite so far and so quickly. Before anyone realized what was happening, I'd ripped past calculus and analytical geometry, had launched into quantum analysis, and was thoroughly caught up in a study tracing the lyric patterns in French literature from the fifteenth century through Rimbaud. And this type of thing was happening in all my subject areas. At that point, of course, they were forced to import professors from the local university, which naturally caused considerable insecurity among the regular faculty and threw the school's budget entirely out of kilter. Finally, they decided the best thing they could do was to send me off to the local university until they were able to beef up the program.

"Did they?" we asked.

"Oh yes. They brought in Tyler and Frazier to zip up the curriculum; Goodlad and Anderson came back to have another look to make sure things were ticking along properly. Harold Gores later came in, tore down all the inner walls, installed wall-to-wall carpeting, and planted sunflowers on the roof. Pretty soon, all those cloudy pictures of George Washington came down, and Picassos and Matisses were sprouting all over the place. In the meanwhile, they'd sent all the teachers back for extensive in-service training. At the end of a year, I was ready to come back, or I suppose you might say they were ready for *me* to come back. But by that time the newspapers had gotten wind of the whole thing, and I'd become something of a celebrity.

We wanted to ask him how it felt to be a celebrity but were suddenly seized with reluctance at the banality of the question. He seemed to sense this and brought the matter up himself.

"This business of being a celebrity. . . . At first, it was hard to adjust to. It was certainly hard to adjust to the changes that had taken place in me. I began to think very differently and, naturally, to sound differently. In the beginning, mother cried a great deal and said I sounded just like all those obnoxious juvenile leads in the Broadway plays. But the hardest thing of all was the realization that I was different—and different from other people my age. Of course, I adjusted to that. The more I learned, the more I came to realize that everyone is different. Knowledge is supposed to free you from fear, and I suppose in that sense it helped me—at least the fear of not being like everyone else. But as I said, if you really want to meet a more typical example of the nongraded child, you should go meet Fatty Watson and Schuyler Tiller. I think you'd like them, and if you go down to Schrafft's almost any afternoon between three and four, you'll most likely find them."

We told him that, while we were sure we would enjoy meeting them, time was limited, and if he would mind explaining just why they were more typical. . . .

"Oh, that's easy," he said, "and quite simple. I'm something of a nongraded child carried to the extreme. As for Schuyler and Fatty, everything happened to them that was supposed to happen. Take Fatty, for example. Math always threw him, but at the same time he had a real talent for languages. Under a graded plan, he would have been stuck in the third grade for years until he'd mastered all the rudiments of long division, at the same time learning all the same old things about geography and English over and over again, no matter how well he knew them in the first place. As it was, under the nongraded system, he was still stuck on long division for quite a while, but by the time he'd mastered the rudiments he was translating Pushkin in the original. Incidentally, that was before Nabokov came along and made such a splash about it.

"But let me explain it another way," he said, glancing at his watch. "Suppose you were going to hold a foot race between New York City and Newark. It's obvious the racers aren't going to make it by nightfall, but would you send them back the next morning to New York to begin all over again?"

We confessed we wouldn't and, sensing our time was up, thanked the nongraded child for talking with us and prepared to bid goodbye.

"I've enjoyed it, too," he said. "And I hope I'll see you again soon. I don't mean to rush you off but it's almost time for my nap. And this afternoon I'm going over to play a little hockey with the Rangers. I'm only so-so at it, but I enjoy it. Besides, ever since George Plimpton started that sort of thing, every team in town is trying to snare some amateur to write them up."

With that, he held up his index finger, perhaps seeking a westerly wind. "So long," he called after us. "And thanks for coming to see me."

It was high noon, when we left the Hotel of the New World, and last night's snow was beginning to melt under a warm winter's sun. Fine packing weather, we thought, and hastened across the street into the park. It was filled with children playing, and with some strange giddy yearning we reached down to scoop up a handful of snow. As we did, our eye caught upon a small chubby figure bundled in red, seated by the pond, his ice skates resting on the bench beside him. He was reading a paperback book with thoroughly rapt attention, totally oblivious to the sounds of the park swirling about him. Upon closer examination, we noticed it was the French language version of *Les Fleurs du Mal.* We meant to stop and ask him if he was enjoying it, but for some reason we had begun to run, leaping snowbanks, zigzagging through the noonday shoppers and through any number of red lights until we had reached the end of the avenue and the safety of our cubicle.

WE haven't seen the nongraded child for over a year now, although we have had an occasional postcard—one from Rome and another from Boise. Any other details of his whereabouts, we've gleaned from the press. In the meanwhile, since that morning at the Hotel of the New World, our own existence has been far less momentous. We've taken down the storm windows, watched spring come (and go), splashed about in the sea, and put the storm windows back up. The last remnants of autumn are still curling about our section of the country, but the brighter parts have largely dissipated into a steady greyness. Yesterday, with thoughts of the long winter ahead and a rather special conference coming up, we decided to hike down the road to our local library and do a little more research on nongradedness. All in all, it was pretty much of a failure. The local librarian took a dim view of our diggings and inquiries. They're not too current on educational thought in a small town such as this, regarding it largely as newfangled and somewhat suspect. But the librarian did suggest we go over and have a chat with the local schoolmistress who, along with Hedy—the telephone operator—is our main source of information.

The schoolhouse in our town is one room and white clapboard. When we arrived, we found the schoolmistress, Lucy Pimscup, alone, correcting papers and smoking a small French cigar. She told us it was a secret vice, one she had picked up years ago at Radcliffe.

"I was quite a bluestocking in my time," she said. "Of course, I've had to tone down a bit for this part of the country, but much of it has still hung on. Originally, I came here to civilize this town, and I guess you might say that in the process, they've civilized me. At least that's what my husband tells me. In any case, I have a BAMAPHD—B.A. in English, M.A. and Ph.D. in Education, which I suppose qualifies me to talk about either Scott Fitzgerald or nongradedness. I assume you're interested in nongradedness. Why?"

We explained that we were a writer trying to gather some material on the nongraded school before attending a rather special conference.

"Well, nongradedness is nothing new," she said, tossing us an apple from her desk. "It's merely discussed as if it were. But then, you've probably been around the educational empire too long for that to surprise you. As a matter of fact, if you really want to get your fingers dusty, you can trace nongradedness as far back as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the Dame and 'district' schools. It was the Quincy Grammar School that set the pattern for the graded structure as we now know it. And that came in around 1848—during the nineteenth century when they were locking up a good many things, including school organization.

"But I'm getting ahead of myself, although I don't wonder. I had a sitz bath this morning, which always charges me up. Very bracing things, sitz baths. But that's neither here nor there. The point is, before the Quincy School had appeared on the horizon, the district school had pretty much taken root and emerged as the one-room schoolhouse, which is what you're sitting in, only then it was nongraded, mainly because of small enrollment. Do you really want to hear all this?"

We told her we did, that we were anxious to gather as much information as possible.

"Of course, what finally sounded the death knell was the influence of the Prussian schools. At that time, the graded school seemed to our educators quite an innovation. The rest is legend, as you know. Within twenty years or so, the graded school was, to coin a phrase, 'sweeping the nation.' And I might add that almost ever since someone or other has tried to either break down or at least modify the plan. Some of these attempts you could consider pioneer like the St. Louis Plan and the Pueblo Plan. But then I don't think I have to go into that kind of detail, do I"

We told her it wouldn't be necessary.

"Good. I'd much rather talk about Scott Fitzgerald. Besides, I don't think it's ever safe to tell writers too much. They misinterpret, and then suddenly they become confused experts. In any case, here in a one-room schoolhouse you might say we have optimum conditions for nongradedness. Of course, we don't have it. But then our problem is enrollment. Nothing more, nothing less."

"What is the enrollment?" we asked.

"Well, there isn't any. That's the problem. You see, they've all gone to the city. I suppose I can't blame them too much. They have pressure cookers there and high-speed elevators and all-digit-dialing. But I haven't any doubt that they'll be back. In fact, just the other day I heard a rumor that they'd left the city some time ago and moved to the suburbs, which means they're heading in this direction. I tell you it's only a question of time. And with the length of time it takes news to get to this town, it may be only another day or so before they're here. In the meanwhile, I don't really mind the leisure. It's been rather nice having so many free hours after all those busy years. I've been able to read and think about the things I've always wanted to think about—like the presidency of Martin Van Buren and an old organdy dress I once had and the way grasshoppers mate and the Lincoln Memorial. Really, it's been quite a bash. Today, I thought quite a bit—and I mean quite a bit—about penicillin and Luise Rainer and the Panama Canal and a new book called *How to Put Some Sizzle in Your Teaching*. So you see, I don't get bored. Every teacher should try it occasionally."

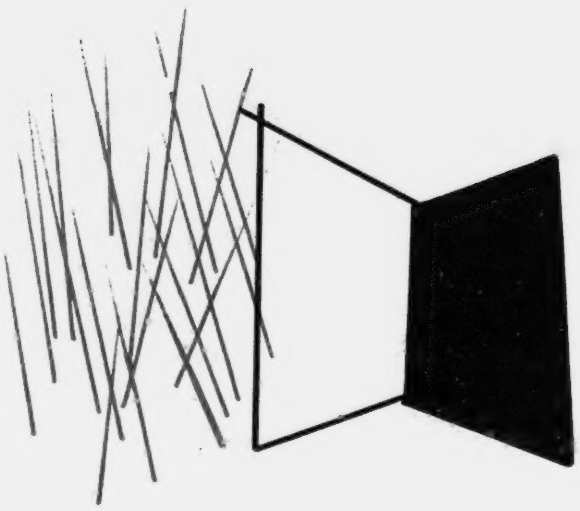
We assured her it sounded very exciting.

"I'm writing a book, too—a dictionary of educationalese. Are you familiar with educationalese?"

We told her that we'd heard it existed and on occasion had caught a few snatches of it being spoken at a place near the Ford Foundation where we frequently eat lunch when we're in town. Yet, we couldn't say we were really familiar with it.

"Well, it's a patois, like Yiddish. In fact, in many ways it's a little bit like trying to understand Yiddish. It has a familiar ring to it, and yet it seems slightly out of focus. It borrows from a number of languages—a little from the English language, a little from the language of the social scientists, and invents what it can't draw upon. Occasionally, someone makes an imaginative mistake, and that's accepted, too. The result isn't always as literary as *Finnegan's Wake,* but it's frequently as inscrutable. However, it does have the effect of elevating. And we're quite concerned with elevation in the education profession. I'd like to see a little more levitation myself, but that's beside the point. I feel the book will make quite a scholarly contribution to the field.

"Anyway, the Board of Education has been very nice in keeping me on. I suppose I'm something of a relic that goes along with McGuffey readers and hickory sticks, and you could probably find me in the Sears Roebuck catalogue under antiquities. Yet, it's very nice to have antiquities around. It makes everyone feel disgustingly modern and up-to-date. But I don't mind. That's what I'm here for. Besides, I was a mad young thing once. After Radcliffe, I went to Vienna for a year and ate pastries and talked to Freud and danced and danced. So I've had my day. I may be an old warhorse now, but I'm



capable of being recharged. Just an occasional sitz bath will do it. All that reading and thinking have helped, too. However, at the moment, I'm getting ready for nongradedness. Have you ever gotten ready for nongradedness?"

We told her we hadn't, somewhat apologetic for our lack of experience.

"Well, I got ready for nongradedness twenty years ago, but they're getting ready for it a little differently today. Of course, at that time, I never really got to put it into action. They wouldn't let me do that. We had to stick pretty much to a graded system, but I used to take the sting out of it a little by grouping the children as birds rather than in grades. Of course, it worked out the same; it merely sounded better. Instead of starting in the first grade, they used to start off as parakeets and eventually graduate as eagles. In between, they'd flutter around for a while as canaries or sparrows or robins. I must admit that at times it got to be a little like an aviary around here, but it was the best I could do. However, this time I'm pretty sure they're going to implement, as the phrasing goes. And, as I said, I'm all set. Naturally, I've had to work it out somewhat abstractly with an imaginary class (I'm correcting their papers now), but that's all part of getting ready for nongradedness. Abstraction, that is. I've worked out groups—flexible, naturally—so that some of the pupils are in as many as five different groups. What's more, the groups are different in nature. Some slow, some fast. Really, it's quite a well-thought-out scheme, if I do say so myself. I've taken the lid off the curriculum, too, opened it up. No more single basic texts here. I may even refer them to *Anthony Adverse* on occasion. I understand it's quite harmless now, although when I taught in Boston, I used to smuggle it into the faculty lounge. But as I said, I was a mad young thing in my day. I once even wrote an anonymous love note to James Branch Cabell. However, to get back to nongradedness, I'm currently laboring over a system of evaluation. I've decided to throw the A-B-C-D-E-F system out and substitute 'working up to capacity,' 'working below capacity,' and 'he's surprising me.' Believe me, there aren't too many surprises in a graded system, which may be the trouble with it. In any case, that's how I've been getting ready for nongradedness. What a plan!"

At this point, she leaned back in her chair, puffing gently on her cigar and staring contemplatively at the ceiling.

"I suppose I'll receive a grant," she said after a pause. "I mean, how many one-room schoolhouses open up again? It just doesn't happen every day. I tell you, it's almost certain one of the foundations will set this up as a laboratory school. I imagine I'll have a staff, too. I understand that back in the city, where they have parking meters and artificial firewood, some of the teachers have their own staffs. One thing is certain. I'll have no more time to think about Chester Arthur and the State of South Dakota. Anyway, did all of this answer your questions on nongradedness?"

We told her it did but that we wondered if she thought the nongraded school would ever be widespread.

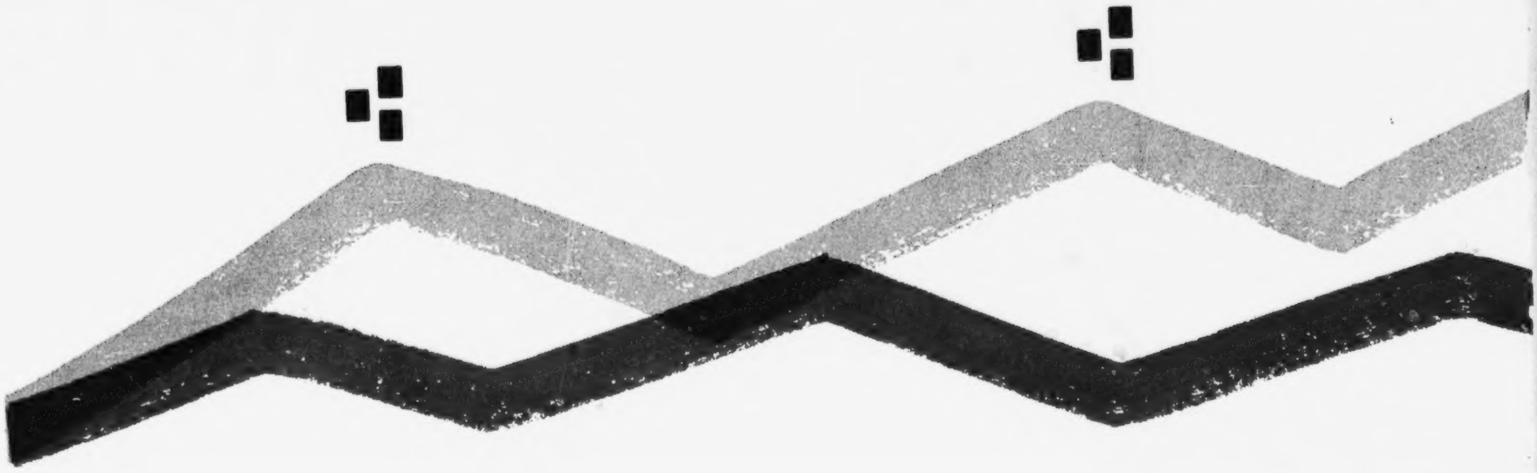
"Who knows? Keppel once said it was the fastest thing coming down the pike. I think, though, there are times when all of us wonder a bit if someone didn't run out of gas."

With that we thanked her and hastened out into an early autumn dusk. We had gone only a short way down the road when we heard a voice bellow in our direction.

"I wanted to ask you," she called after us, "what this conference is you were talking about."

We told her it was the Conference on Interrelated Thought in Education and that we hoped we'd see her there.

"Don't bet your last dollar on it," she told us, and then disappeared, broom in hand, back into the schoolhouse.



THE REPORT CARD IN A

ONE of the surest ways to start an argument in any group of educators is to ask for a consensus on the best method of marking children's progress through school. To confound the issue, invite a few parents to join the discussion and ask them to describe the way they would prefer to have their children marked. Then ask educators to do two things: first, to list the ways in which they were instructed to mark pupils during their educational preparation and, second, to read professional books and articles to find suggestions and advice.

Let the reader be prepared for a devastating experience. Surely, the marks bestowed on children have a lasting effect on their mental well-being. Yet there is less agreement, less teacher preparation, and less helpful professional literature to aid teachers in reporting on children than there is about any other phase of the educational program. It is possible to find much more helpful advice about cleaning the floors and boilers than about marking children's progress. In one book on elementary education, the topic of report cards was given thirteen lines; the safety patrol, seventeen lines; and the PTA, nineteen pages!

The usual report card presents the teacher with a nearly impossible task. No matter how great the effort to keep the marking system objective, it invariably ends up as a subjective evaluation. The reader will say, "That may be true in *some* areas, but in something like mathematics, there's no question! It's objective." Is it? Supposing the problem reads: 4 + 8 = ( ). How many teachers will accept the answer "12"? How many will accept "10 + 2" or "15 − 3" or "8 + 4"? Yet these last answers are absolutely as accurate

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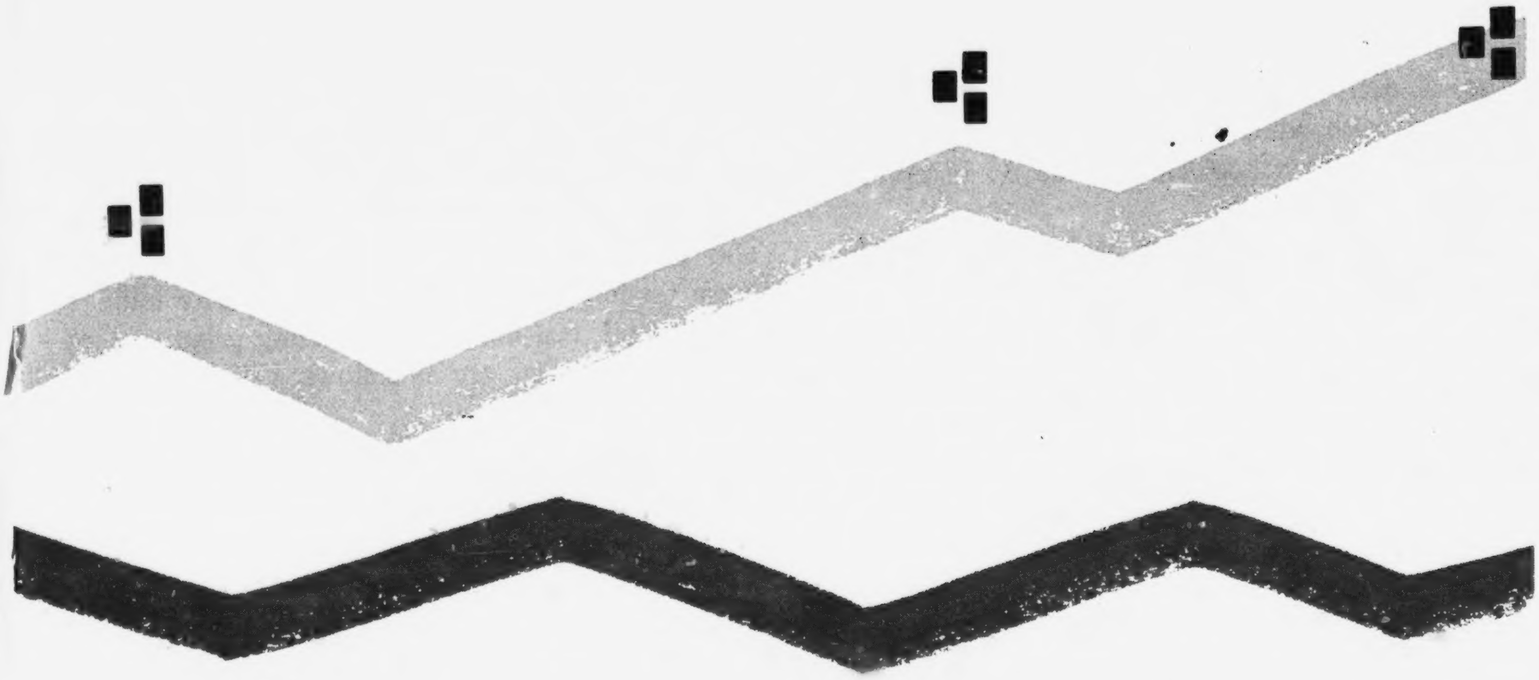
At the time this article was written, Ruth E. Chadwick was Principal, Horace Mann School, Newtonville, Massachusetts; Rose Durham was a teacher in the Hamilton School, Newton Lower Falls, Massachusetts; Marion Morse was Reading Consultant, Newton Public Schools, Newton, Massachusetts.



NONGRADED SCHOOL

RUTH E. CHADWICK
ROSE DURHAM
MARION MORSE

as the answer which the teacher had in mind.

If the teacher has a test with twenty examples, one could ask how much time he spent rating the relative value of each example. Is a word problem worth the same, more, or less, than a simple addition example? Or does he automatically say, "Three wrong—87%—worth a B"? So one could go on.

The staff at Hamilton School, Newton Lower Falls, Massachusetts, were forced to take a new look at the whole problem of reporting when they embarked upon a plan for continuous progress, the development of a nongraded school. Like every facet of the school program, the reporting procedures no longer seemed adequate or accurate. Now, after nearly four years of study, development, and use of a new evaluative tool, the staff still feel that many of the problems are unresolved. At the same time, the form presently used comes closer to answering the problem of communication than any we used previously.

If one looks at the report card as a punitive measure which allows the weak teacher to keep the upper hand, then perhaps an A, B, C, or 50%, 60%, 90% rating scale has merit. Even the name "report card" is more appropriate if the teacher is to use it as a whip.

To be perfectly honest, however, the authors question whether the threat of a failing mark or of nonpromotion ever really spurred any elementary school child to do better work. And what of the child who gave his all, worked diligently, and behaved himself only to receive the bad news in June that he had "failed"? How did this system encourage him?

Thus, our first step was to take a new look at the whole problem and decide what the goals of reporting should be.

In a nongraded school dedicated to continuous progress, each child should be viewed over a long-term period. He should be evaluated on three bases: 1) in terms of his own ability insofar as this can be ascertained; 2) in terms of his peers, those children with whom he is now in competition and with whom he will be in competition during his public school career; and 3) in terms of a national sampling.

While regular evaluation of each pupil is a vital component of any school program, it is an absolute necessity in a school based upon individualization of instruction. Therefore, the first purpose of evaluation should be to help the teacher make more meaningful plans for the child on a day-to-day basis. Then the decision has to be made as to how much of this evaluation can be shared productively with parents.

The first major shift in thinking came about when it was decided that what was needed was regular and systematic evaluation for the benefit of the teacher and then a tool to share this evaluation with parents on a planned, scheduled basis. Now the instrument was more accurately called an evaluation form with the hope that the term "report card," like the word "grade," would disappear from our vocabulary.

From this point on, in this article, the authors will use a conversational form to reconstruct the thinking that has taken place over the past three years.

Miss Chadwick: Marion, one of our first steps was to look at the section on reading which you developed. Would you describe this for us?

Mrs. Morse: Initially, the reading report form was designed to do two things in reporting to parents: 1) It was to indicate developmentally the sequence of skills which the child would be expected to master during his primary unit years; and 2) It was to indicate to the parent which of these skills the child had mastered at the time the report was issued. As you have said, Ruth, it was the first skill subject which we attempted to evaluate in any written form. Therefore, of necessity, our efforts were experimental.

Format and method of evaluation had to be established, a task which, though not monumental, caused several serious discussions and a heated argument or two among members of the staff. The format was ultimately agreed upon and a checklist was decided to be the most useful method of evaluation for our purposes.

The second step was to decide *what* to evaluate. At that time, we used a basal reading program which began at the readiness level and progressed through the primary unit and beyond. An analysis was made to identify the skills contained in the basal program and supplementary materials as well as to determine the developmental steps of the total program.

This inventory of reading skills resulted in a six-page reading report list of those items we felt to be essential to a basic, solid reading program. The major categories are as follows:

I. Auditory Skills
II. Visual Skills
III. Comprehension
IV. Silent and Oral Reading
V. Language (oral and written)
VI. Dictionary Skills

Under each of these major headings were explanatory items. These items, which could be called subskills, were listed in sequence whenever possible. For example, the first page read as follows:

I. Auditory Skills
  A. Rhyme
  B. Sound Differences:
    High-low
    Loud-soft
    Long-short
  C. Initial Consonants
  D. Final Consonants
  E. Medial Consonants
  F. Initial Blends
  G. Final Blends
  H. Consonant Digraphs
  I. Vowels:
    Long
    Short
    Silent
  J. Parts of Words

Quantitative categories of the checklist generally read "Commendable," "Accurate," and "Need for Improvement," but on the Auditory Skills page (indicated above) each child was evaluated in terms of Hearing, Identification, and Application.

For example, using Initial Consonants as the category:

1. The child *hears* the difference in sound if he can tell that *bell* and *ball* begin the same way and that *big* and *little* don't.

2. He *identifies* this if he can tell that *bell* and *ball* begin with *b*.

3. He *applies* this knowledge if he can give another word *(boy)* that begins the same way.

Thus the difference in the evaluative comments. Visual skills were qualified through "Exposure," "Mastery," and/or "Application." All other categories were treated in the same way.

Realistic evaluation of the inventory was made by members of the staff and the project advisor, Robert H. Anderson, Professor of Education, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University. General reaction was favorable, but it was felt that parents would not be able to interpret the report without a course in reading—a very valid comment. The staff suggested that the inventory become a teacher tool, and so it has. Each child is evaluated through this inventory, and it is shown to the parent during conference time when it can be interpreted to the parent by the child's teacher. This process enables the teacher to pinpoint the level of skill.

Having created an inventory, however, we still had no reading report per se. Staff discussions then centered around what kinds of things the parent might really want to know about his child's reading progress. We thought that basically these were very simple. We interpreted the often asked question, "How is he doing?" to mean: "Can my child read well?" (decoding and word analysis); "Can he apply his reading skills to other written work?" (thinking skills); and "Where does he stand in relation to the total reading program?" (developmental progress).

With these questions in mind, we set up several major categories of reading qualified by subcategories to indicate how well (or how poorly) the child was progressing in each of these areas. The first three are self-explanatory.

I. Ability to read
II. Comprehension
III. Reading and Thinking Skills

These categories covered decoding and word analysis skills, oral and silent reading, critical thinking, and comprehension, but still there remained the task of telling parents how far the child had progressed through the total program. This was somewhat of a problem because we now had a variety of reading programs going on within the school. The younger children and some of the older children who had not experienced success with the basal program were being taught with linguistic materials, while those children in the intermediate unit were working with individualized reading. We hoped to develop a form which would be appropriate for all children within the school and for these different approaches to reading instruction.

Two more categories were then added. The first (item IV on the report form) was "Progress through Developmental Reading Series" beneath which was a bar graph to be filled in by the teacher to indicate how far along in the total program the child had progressed. If the child was participating in the basal program which contained ten books, the bar was darkened or an arrow used to indicate how far he had progressed in terms of tenths; if the child was participating in the linguistic program which contained six books, indication was made on the bar in terms of sixths. This gave some approximate picture of what the child had accomplished and how much more he had to do.

Our last category was designed to report on Individualized Reading. Because skills were evaluated in the first part of the report form, it was necessary only to indicate that the child was participating in Individualized Reading and to qualify his performance in that program. Thus, the category read:

V. Progress in Independent Reading Program
  A. Quality
  B. Quantity

Parenthetical remarks further described each subcategory.

This completed the reading report page. It contained five major categories and evaluated all the areas we had determined to be important in establishing our goals for evaluation.

Now that we have worked with this reading report for several marking periods, we have found places where revision is indicated for various reasons. Generally, the report form serves our purposes reasonably well, certainly better than any other we have examined.

Miss Chadwick: Let's consider some of the other areas in which we evaluate a child's progress. Rose, why don't you describe the areas of math and science and music, art, and physical education?

Mrs. Durham: With the present trends in the field of mathematics, this subject is one which saw a face-lifting in vocabulary. We found it necessary to categorize and list the mathematics concepts in order to tell parents what is covered in the primary unit. In doing this, we had to use terms quite unfamiliar to the lay person, but we felt that explanations would be valuable during parent conference periods. Some new terms included are sets, logic, bases of enumeration, equations, and inequalities. We felt that for many parents a bar graph at the end of the evaluation sheet would show more concretely how far their child had progressed.

Science is exciting today for children and teachers. A recent science unit on "Foods and Garbage" in our primary unit, for example, turned out to be very exciting for the children because it related so closely to their everyday lives.

In setting up our evaluation form for science, we carefully considered the basic understandings and attitudes which we were attempting to develop in the child. We devote a large portion of the form to this area and also mark the child on a group of skills we feel are important: use of resource materials, joining in discussions, using sensory perceptions, and ability to check sources for accuracy. The unit of study is noted at the bottom of the form.

As for music, art, and physical education, our main concern is to establish an atmosphere through varied media and experiences which will give the child enjoyment and appreciation of the physical and aesthetic activities of life. All three subjects are evaluated on one sheet because we felt no need for lengthy descriptions or detailed ratings in these areas. In addition, although we have consultants in these fields, most of the instruction is done by the classroom teacher who doesn't really qualify as an expert in evaluating these specialized areas.

Our terminology includes the statement: "Shows apparent enjoyment of and participation in art, music, and physical education."

About this point in developing our evaluation form, we realized how lengthy the evaluation could become. We decided we must limit the report to one page per subject.

Miss Chadwick: We ended up with seven pages. On one of these sheets, we attempt to look at the child in terms of his social and emotional growth.

Mrs. Durham: We have always emphasized, though, that our evaluation of social and emotional growth was in terms of the effect on the child in the learning situations. There is *no* attempt on our part to consider ourselves psychologists or psychiatrists and psychoanalyze the child.

Miss Chadwick: This is quite true. We look at the child in terms of his self-acceptance, his relations with others, and the development of self-control and self-direction. What about the other areas? Marion, why don't you describe the areas of language arts and social studies?

Mrs. Morse: Language arts is the major emphasis of the primary unit curriculum. It encompasses, of course, reading, handwriting, oral language, spelling, and listening. Because reading is such an important part of language arts, we report on it separately. The program would not be complete, however, without some evaluation of the other skills in this important area.

How the child communicates with others and how he expresses himself in his own language should certainly be evaluated. For some children, communicating with others comes very easily; they have excellent command of the language and great facility in recording thoughts and ideas. For other children, this presents great problems. A child with a limited background of experience has little to share with others and few ways to express himself in terms that others can understand and accept.

Our problem was to find a series of items basic to the child's communicative skills—not too difficult a task—and then to evaluate the child in terms of these items—a very difficult task, indeed. How, for example, can one adequately judge a child's creative writing? Neither percentages nor even letter grades are satisfactory, for surely evaluation of creative writing is subjective in many ways, and the child's work in this area depends so much on the child's experiences, background, and emotional security.

The only way to evaluate what the child produces orally and in written work is to evaluate him in terms of himself. This is true in all areas of the curriculum, but it becomes most obvious when evaluating language arts as a skill subject.

We established three categories in which the child is evaluated:

I. Oral Language
II. Written Language
III. Handwriting

Subskills under each category interpret what is meant by each of the main headings. For example, spelling, originality, and correctness of language are listed under written language.

In evaluating handwriting, a bar graph is used, similar to the one described in the reading report form.

Children in the primary unit are all introduced to manuscript writing, but they move into cursive when it is evident that their small muscle development is sufficient for them to handle the more sophisticated cursive. This happens at various times with different children.

As far as social studies is concerned, our program is undergoing some major changes. Emphasis has shifted from teaching factual, statistical information to the broader idea of developing an understanding of cultural attitudes throughout the world society and an appreciation of the values and beliefs of our own heritage and those of our neighbors.

Therefore, much of our page devoted to social studies expands upon two main ideas:

I. Basic Understandings
II. Basic Attitudes

Although these are not judged for each child, they are included on the form to help the parent become aware of the underlying purposes of the social studies program. These items are interpretative rather than evaluative. Stress is placed on the fact that values and beliefs are strongly influenced by the home and the community and that these basic understandings and attitudes are guideposts for the parent as well as the teacher.

The third main area which is evaluated for each child is a series of skills developed through work with social studies content. Some of these are critical thinking skills which would appear in any good reading program, but the staff felt that they would best be evaluated in this content area because they apply to it so directly.

Also listed is the name of the unit of study the child has been working on during the evaluation period.

Miss Chadwick: Then came the big hassle! Do you remember the hours we spent determining what words we would use in evaluating children's progress? We ended up with "commendable," "adequate," and "need for improvement." Rose, why don't you try to define those for us as we use them?

Mrs. Durham: Yes, we certainly did hassle, and it is not completely in the past tense. Our reasons for deciding on the terms commendable, adequate, and need for improvement were to try to give each child credit for his effort and achievement and yet not evaluate him in a several point scale which would indicate an A, B, C rating. In evaluating each child, we based our decisions on two criteria: 1) Is the child giving all he has, exerting utmost effort? and 2) Is he progressing with the speed and understanding we expect of him in his grouping?

If a child is checked in the *commendable* column, we think he is doing outstanding work in terms of his ability and is making a capacity effort. Many times, a child may be marked *commendable* not because he is a so-called "A" student but because he is seriously concerned with his own progress. *Adequate* signifies average performance with average effort. We feel that the great majority of children fall within this category and that this is a perfectly acceptable rating for most children. *Need for improvement* indicates that we feel the child has more to give and more territory to cover.

Our evaluation is based on individual progress, but we feel we must also consider progress in terms of the child's peers and a national sampling.

Miss Chadwick: We haven't mentioned the reverse of each sheet in the skills area. We felt that we needed to do two more things. First, we all are aware of the importance of initiative and self-direction in the process of education. Some of the items which reflect this can be classified as work habits. Does he follow directions? Can he work independently? Does he use his time well? We have listed six work habits which we believe contribute to a child's success in school. We attempt to show the parent which of these the child is developing successfully.

Then, second, we have left a space for the teacher to make a comment each evaluation period—the kind of comment which makes it a really personal evaluation. It's a waste of time if this comment is nothing more than "She's a lovely child; I enjoy having her in my class."

The purpose of the individual personal remark is to make the parent aware of his role in the child's education. More and more, we need the help of every parent if we are to equip the child to live in our complex world; the school cannot do the job alone. This is where we must be specific: "Can you use a weekend soon to visit the historic spots in our community to give your child a more personal feeling for history?" or even, "Ask Mary to read to you out loud for fifteen minutes a day while you are getting dinner. She needs this practice."

Miss Chadwick: Marion, how do parent conferences fit into this process of evaluation?

Mrs. Morse: Parent conferences have always been part of our reporting program. We know how important they are and how much good can come from them. This is especially true if we listen as well as talk.

The big question, therefore, was not *how* to get the evaluative report into the parents' hands, but *who* would do it. We have established no set rule about this. Sometimes, the teacher who has the child in reading is the one to make the conference appointment and to confer with the parent. The conference lasts twenty minutes or half an hour and may be held before or after school or during the school day when the teacher may have a released period. Many times, the reading and math teacher together plan and carry out the conference.

If the reading teacher feels she needs help from any of the other teachers who work with the child, she asks them to participate in the conference. This has happened on many occasions and has worked out well for all concerned. Also, a parent has the opportunity to request a conference with only one teacher or with all the teachers concerned with his child.

During the conference, each page of the report is discussed with the parent and questions are answered concerning the pupil's progress. It is during this time that the teacher may refer to the reading inventory and also may have samples of the child's work which reinforce the findings and statements on the report form.

The original of the report form is sent home with the parent for him to keep. A copy is kept on file at the school in the child's cumulative record folder, along with the reading inventory. Each parent may have two conferences each year. Special conferences for special problems, of course, can be scheduled at any time.

Miss Chadwick: Finally, where do we go from here? We've been using these forms for a couple of years at Hamilton and now at Horace Mann, another nongraded school. What do you see as the problems? The strengths?

Mrs. Durham: I think we have a partial answer to our problem of evaluating a child's progress in a nongraded program. We feel we are meeting parents' needs in relation to their role in the child's education. We also feel that because of these evaluation forms, we have gained a clearer picture of ourselves, of our aims and goals in teaching. But we also feel that we might make some changes. We might change some of the terminology or we might delete part of it.

Mrs. Morse: Surely the thoroughness of the report and the identification of individual strengths and weaknesses resulting from in-depth evaluation of the child constitute much of the strength of the evaluation form. Perhaps, though, in another way, this may be its weakness: because it is so thorough, it is of necessity lengthy and may be somewhat confusing to the parent who is used to A, B, C, D, E. It needs much explanation and interpretation.

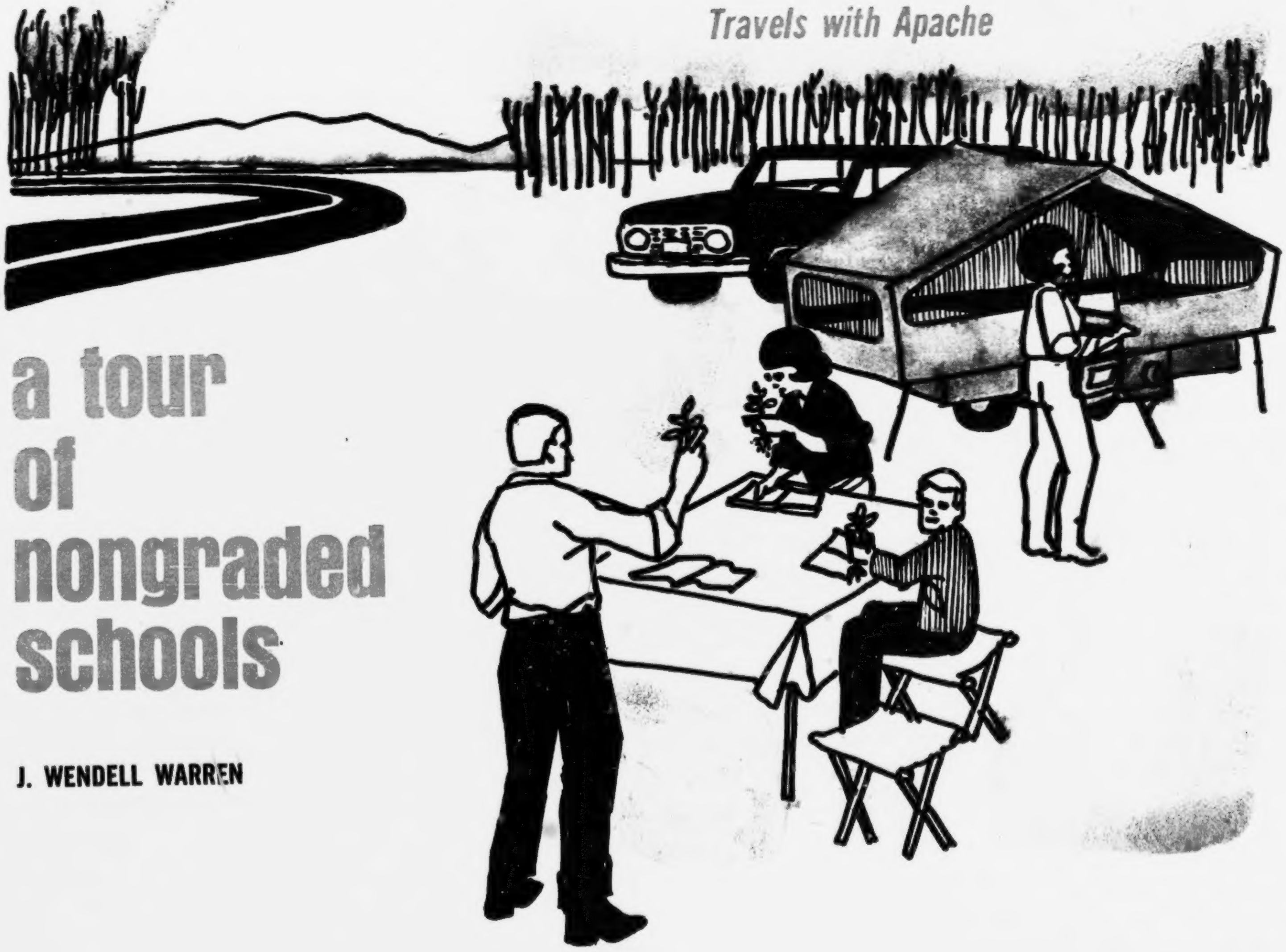
Miss Chadwick: Yet, what can be more important than constant evaluation if we are truly to individualize instruction? Is the time we spend valuable if our evaluation leads us to more purposeful instruction?

It all comes back to our original statements. First, if the evaluation is to be evaluation, it must of necessity be lengthy. It must force the teachers to view the child first and foremost in terms of his own ability. The evaluation must present the child to the parent in the best possible light. This is, after all, the parent's most precious possession whom he has endowed with the best inheritance he possibly could.

The evaluation must also present to the child a realistic and acceptable picture of himself, a picture that gradually leads him to a realization of the person he is and may become. His strengths and his weaknesses should be made clear. At the same time, he must see himself as a worthwhile member of society with whom he can live happily and comfortably. Unless we can do this for each child, all else we attempt to do is largely a waste of time.

Travels with Apache

a tour of nongraded schools



J. WENDELL WARREN

ONE winter morning late in January 1966, with the temperatures hovering at zero and snow knee-deep, the Wandering Warrens climbed into Tasco, their station wagon, and left their modest but comfortable home. Jack, the twelve-year-old, was bursting with anticipation. The prospect of seeing a vast country, from colonial Concord to the Coral Keys and Everglades of Florida, from the Gulf of Mexico to the Sierras of the Western Rockies, was inconceivable. The anticipation of riding over the hard-packed sands of Daytona Beach and hearing the barking seals in San Francisco was overwhelming. His excitement was unbridled! Even the sobering thoughts of the ever-present cornet and school books were temporarily thrust into the background.

Susan, Jack's ten-year-old sister, with her usual quiet composure, might have contained her glee. But the sparkle and twinkle of her dark brown eyes betrayed her as she boarded Tasco. She was not convinced, however, that she would enjoy being tutored by her mother and father, nor was she sure that they would be adequate for the job. And the expectation of a February swim in the surf under a warm Sarasota sun or shelling on the white sands of Naples were dreams as yet unrealized.

David, a wide-eyed eight-year-old looked forward to the cowboys and Indians of the South-

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west. He envisioned the thrill of a real round-up and an authentic wagon train. School was easily and happily dismissed from his thinking. In fact, school lessons just might be more fun, even if Mother and Dad were the teachers.

Loquacious Deborah was the youngest member of the family. Her blue eyes and blonde hair were only a part of her charm. For more than one of her five years she had seriously been planning her sabbatical, and leaving home with her family was the fulfillment of her well-laid plans.

Apache, a camping tent trailer, was an eager companion who would offer the family both protection from the weather and a sense of security for five months. She had travelled before, and her "shakedown cruise" had seasoned her as worthy land craft. Now she was being challenged to the limit for she was to be a home away from home in this 15,000-mile trek. For 120 nights of camping, in sites as diverse as the terrain of our country from the Atlantic to the Pacific and back to the Atlantic again, her collapsible top would be a shield from heat and cold, from rain and sleet and snow, and from dust storms and tornados.

Apache converted readily into a school—a nongraded school—of four students and one, sometimes two, tutors. This was an uncommon school.

Have you ever tried to solve algebraic equations with an opossum waddling out of the underbrush just ten feet away? How does one concentrate upon the multiplication facts with a porpoise playfully seeking attention thirty feet off shore? Nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and adverbs have little appeal when a raccoon is spotted at the next campsite. The economic causes of the Civil War seem insignificant when a brilliant male cardinal alights in a mangrove tree just an arm's length away.

The distractions were awesome but there must be school. And if there must be school, then this was better than school back home.

Gale winds and an approaching blizzard precluded Apache's entrance to the New Jersey Turnpike that day in January. Travel plans were changed and an alternate route south was devised. Motel accommodations provided a happy and restful climax to that first, long, eventful day.

Apache endured the bitter ten-degree coldness of the night and seemed eager to pursue Tasco, who penetrated deep into Virginia on the second day.

This was the beginning of a unique trek with many educational overtones. I had requested and been granted a five-month sabbatical leave from my job as a principal—a sabbatical that was to be used for educational travel and study. I developed an itinerary that would take me to more than thirty nongraded schools across the country, and I proposed to observe and evaluate reporting procedures in these selected schools.

As soon as I knew the educational tour was a reality, I sent an explanation of the study and a survey questionnaire to fifty schools. With favorable responses from forty of them, the itinerary was planned, and visitation appointments were confirmed.

Why should the reporting practices of nongraded organizations be so intensely fascinating? Why should "grades" or "marks"—A, B, C, D, or 71 per cent, 80 per cent, 93 per cent—be challenged? Would it be sacrilegious to tamper with the time-honored, traditional report card of the American elementary school?

I felt a professional compulsion to explore present reporting practices in the light of my own experience. No grades, no marks, no number symbols, not even a report card had been issued in our school for more than five years. Yet pupils were better informed of their progress than they had been under the traditional method, parents had greater understanding of their children's educational development, and teachers were delighted with new reporting procedures.

The characteristics of a nongraded school have been set forth in some detail in Robert Anderson's article in the November 1967 issue of *The National Elementary Principal.* One identifying feature which has probably received less time and attention than all of the others is the reporting system for the nongraded program. My purpose here is to deal with the present status of nongradedness in terms of current evaluating and reporting practices. How do teachers evaluate the growth and progress of children? How and when are evaluations communicated to pupils and parents?

The schools which I observed accepted the theory that each child develops in physical, emotional, social, and academic dimensions unevenly and at a different tempo from that of his peers.

Each school showed an awareness of this diversity among children. But the treatment prescribed by one faculty for its pupils was markedly different from that of another. Nongradedness as practiced in one school was quite unlike gradelessness elsewhere.

Furthermore, the reporting practices of one school were unlike those of another. Even within one school district, reporting procedures varied.

On the basis of their particular status in relationship to reporting techniques, I have placed the schools in one of three categories—typical, atypical, and ideal. For obvious reasons, illustrations have fictitious names. Schools of the same community have been labeled with an identical last name. For example, the John Adams, the Martha Adams, and Henry Adams are schools in the same school district.

The Typical

The typical are defined as the schools that were dissatisfied with present reporting procedures to the extent that they were initiating changes.

The George Washington School in a large southeastern coastal city accommodated white children who were twelve years of age. The 6's, 7's, and 8's had been organized into a nongraded primary unit.

The reading program had been developed around sequential levels, beginning with reading readiness, level 1, and continuing through the third reader, level 6. Children assigned to a specific reading level remained together as a group for the other basic skills instruction. An individualized reading program benefited children who had reading difficulties.

Pupil progress was reported through a primary progress report form which was issued twice during the school year and again at the end of the year. The report indicated that the pupil was progressing satisfactorily or needed improvement. If improvement was needed, a parent conference was requested by the teacher.

Recently the board of education ruled that report cards of all county schools should be standardized with letter grades in all subjects. The traditional graded report card issued every six weeks must replace the progress report form at George Washington. Teachers conformed to the board of education's demands, but they attached to each report card an informal, individual evaluation of the skill development for each youngster.

In a metropolitan city on the southeast coast, the John Adams School is one of three that is experimenting with nongradedness. This innovation was less than two years old when I visited the school. A remedial reading teacher helped youngsters who were deficient in reading, and the librarian assisted youngsters who were working on individual project reports. Teaching each youngster at his own pace and in his own pattern is an accepted philosophy at John Adams, but practical application of the philosophy of continuous progress is a goal not completely attained as yet.

The traditional report card is issued every six weeks, but teachers supplement the A, B, C, D, E grades by attaching individual anecdotal notations.

The Martha Adams is a laboratory school on the campus of the local university. The physical facilities encourage flexible groupings of children. Small teaching spaces can be made larger by folding the accordion-type partitions. The library facility easily accommodates individual and small group research projects.

Although continuous progress of each child, regardless of his pace, is the stated philosophy of the school, in practice this objective is unrealized.

Pupil progress is reported every six weeks through the use of traditional graded symbols on a standard report card.

The Henry Adams School is racially integrated. Twenty per cent of the children are Negro; 40 per cent are Cuban, and 40 per cent are white. They were being instructed according to their own rates and in their own levels of academic content. Children of various ages and years of schooling worked together in common achievement levels. All were having an opportunity to succeed, and each was challenged at his capacity. Nongradedness had meaning and was enthusiastically implemented by a dynamic principal and faculty.

The standard report card, with traditional letter symbols, was sent home every six weeks. In the area of reading, the specific level or reader was indicated.

The Adams Schools represent three attempts at nongrading in a city system of more than 200 schools. Although meager and seemingly insignificant, the organizational changes had instigated a reinvestigation of reporting practices for the total system. In the 1964-65 school year, a committee of professionals—teachers, supervisors, and administrators—was appointed to study reporting procedures.

After more than twelve months of study the committee drafted its recommendations. Excerpts from *Reporting Pupil Progress to Parents* are as follows:

> 1. The administration will establish methods whereby schools will provide parents with information concerning pupil progress. Such methods should include written communication as well as conferences.
> 2. Pupil growth is to be reported in the basic academic areas. . . .
> 3. A report is to be given to parents during the first ten weeks of school. This report is to include the teacher's best estimate of pupil achievement in terms of a) the pupil's own effort to learn, and b) a comparison of the pupil with national achievement levels for his age group. Through the school year, teachers are to communicate with parents and keep them informed of changes in the rate of the pupil's growth in each area. These reports should be given when advantageous to pupil's progress and should serve to stimulate the desire for further progress.
> 4. At the conclusion of the regular school year, the school is to submit a written report to the parents summarizing the pupil's progress for the year by giving the teacher's best estimate of pupil achievement in terms of a) the pupil's own efforts to learn, and b) a comparison of the pupil with national achievement levels for his age group. . . . This end-of-the-year report should include an indication of the pupil's placement for the next school year.
> 5. Reporting procedures are to involve the pupil to the extent that the pupil understands. . . .
> 6. Involving pupils in the reporting procedures should also develop the pupil's ability to engage in increasingly accurate self-evaluations which are vital to formulating his future educational and vocational plans. Maximum use of ability should be encouraged in all students. *The focus of all evaluations should be on the pupil's growth.*
> 7. The number of reporting periods is reduced from six to four. . . .
> 8. Elementary schools have the option of holding a parent-teacher conference, in lieu of any of the first three written reports. . . .
> 9. The report forms used may be developed by individual schools, subject to compliance with written policy, approval of District Office, and information programs with the parents. . . .

In January 1966, the board of education voted against the adoption of this proposed change in reporting policy. It seemed tragic that professional recommendations were so abruptly rejected. One could speculate about the reasons for this but could not deny the apparent cleavage between the professional staff and the board of education.

The status of reporting in typical schools is one of ferment and restlessness. Obviously, the professional practitioners in the schools, who must report, wish to have something to say about how and when to report.

The Atypical

The atypical schools were discontented with the report card and marks but lacked the conviction or the fortitude to generate change.

The Thomas Jefferson School, in a large seaport city on the Gulf Coast, had instituted a nongraded primary unit. Although the principal was vitally interested and was anxious to develop an individualized program of instruction, she had been hampered for two reasons:

1. The faculty had limited understanding of the "continuous progress" concept.
2. The average pupil-teacher ratio was 36-1.

A written report form was issued four times a year, with a code rating of excellent, good, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory. The term "level" was substituted for "grade" on the report form.

In a burgeoning Gulf Coast city, the James Madison School had embraced the concept of nongradedness. This was demonstrated in the language arts class of a Negro teacher. Six of the fourteen children were Mexican, four were white, and four were Negro. The ages of the youngsters ranged from 8 to 12 years. There were three different levels of reading instruction.

Report cards were issued twice a year with these ratings: strong (93-100), high average (85-92), average (76-84), weak (70-75), failing (69 and below).

Fifty miles from the Pacific Ocean, the James Monroe School served children of armed forces personnel. The reading program for the primary children emphasized "continuous progress." Youngsters were "clustered" at their reading achievement levels; "reclustering" accommodated the individual needs of children.

The progress of pupils was reported to parents four times a year on a report card form, with symbol rankings of A, B, C, D, E.

The Thomas Jefferson, the James Madison, and the James Monroe Schools illustrate the diversity in reporting procedures in three vastly different schools of three separate states. The feature common to these schools was their traditional approach to reporting.

The Ideal

The faculties of ideal schools were courageously experimenting with reporting techniques which were dramatically different from the time-honored and traditionally oriented procedures.

The John Quincy Adams School, located in a southern California city and attached to a university, was completely nongraded. Each child was placed in an instructional group on the basis of an individual diagnosis. Some instructional groups were using team teaching as a method to facilitate "custom tailored learning." Nongradedness as a practical organizational pattern was introduced four years ago.

Because the major functions of the school are to promote research and experimentation in education, the enrollment is privately controlled. Representations of varied economic, social, racial, and intellectual backgrounds are carefully maintained. The enrollment is neither exclusive nor unique in character.

The progress of youngsters was being reported in parent-teacher conferences two or more times a year at irregular intervals. A pupil-teacher conference preceded each parent-teacher conference. At the end of the year, a written anecdotal evaluation was provided for each parent.

The Andrew Jackson School is an east coast urban laboratory school, directly affiliated with a private educational institution, where children come from many geographic segments of the community. The local public board of education readily accepted the standards of instruction which the laboratory school had established for itself. Negro and white children, ages 6-12 years, were divided into two organizational units—primary and intermediate.

"As soon as a child has mastered the skills and has gained the understandings at one level, he is instructed at the next highest level, regardless of his age or of the length of time he has been in school." This statement of practice is a quotation drawn from a description of the characteristics of the school.

Pupil progress is reported in parent-teacher conferences scheduled at definite intervals throughout the school year. Previous to the parent-teacher conference there is a pupil-teacher conference. The specific strengths and weaknesses of each pupil are candidly discussed. No report cards are issued, and no A, B, C, D, E grades are given.

The faculties of ideal schools had broken with the past. They exemplified the purest forms of nongradedness. Having become completely ungraded, they had abandoned the out-moded reporting practices of the graded school.

Conclusion

Clearly, reporting practices in gradeless schools across the country are multiple and diverse. The atypical schools represented by Jefferson and Madison and Monroe have accepted the nongraded philosophy, but the reporting procedures are those of a graded organization. This is a marked inconsistency.

The faculties of typical schools were attempting to revamp their traditional reporting systems. Teachers responsible for assessing pupil progress were disenchanted with marks and symbols. This was sharply illustrated in the Washington and Adams Schools.

The most dramatic modifications of present reporting techniques were those demonstrated by the John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson Schools, where pupil-teacher and parent-teacher conferences have replaced report cards and marks.

A final observation involves boards of education. They apparently favor marking symbols and graded report cards. And here is a challenge to our profession. We need to make a concerted effort to inform boards of education about effective methods of evaluating and reporting pupil progress.

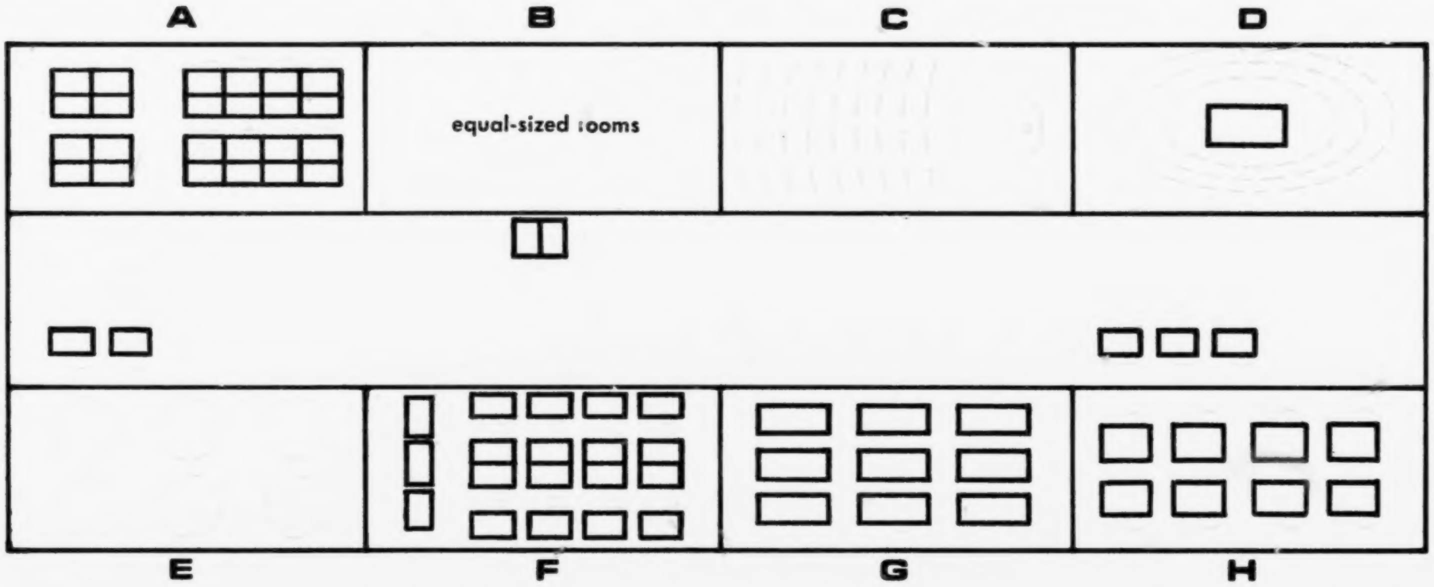
Back, now, to Apache and the Wandering Warrens. As we traveled, each of us kept a diary, recording the things—great or small—that we found especially interesting. Camping at Big Bend National Park, at Grand Canyon, at Yosemite, and Mesa Verde will not be forgotten. But if the memory should dim a bit, the diary record will revive the thrills, the despairs, the delights, and the occasional disappointments of five months of unprecedented happiness together.

The sheen of new brick, the smell of fresh paint, the gloss of new tile, and the color of new plastics all tend to excite and please the senses of an educator. One might indeed speculate upon how quickly the ugly, unsafe, old buildings would be demolished if the laymen and professionals of this country insisted upon improvements in facilities to accompany improvements in curriculum and instruction. Brick and carpeting are no panacea for educational shortcomings, but what a morale booster better facilities can be. No mass demolition is anticipated, however, so what are some of the things we need to take into account when we consider physical facilities for a nongraded school?

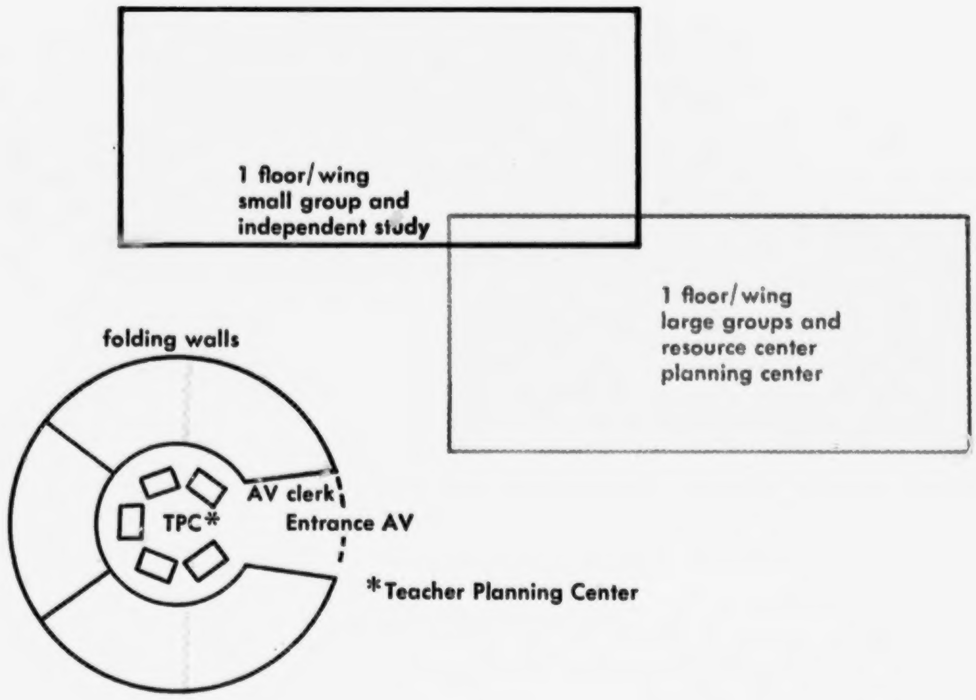
If the philosophical overview of nongradedness as a theoretical proposition is accepted, then the physical facilities for a nongraded school may be expected to vary. You need not necessarily feel that the structure to which you are assigned will be a major deterrent to the implementation of a nongraded philosophy. Just as one does not anticipate an exact pattern of organization, so one does not expect to see exact reproductions of plant structures. Granted, when you are fortunate enough to plan facilities for a full-blown nongraded program, these facilities will differ considerably from the box-like structures prevalent over the last century.

There are three dominant considerations in school plant usage for facilitating nongraded programs: 1) a wide variety of learning activities requiring modified spaces; 2) a wide variety of materials and media requiring appropriate housing, plumbing, electricity, and the like; and 3) a large area for cooperative planning by adults.

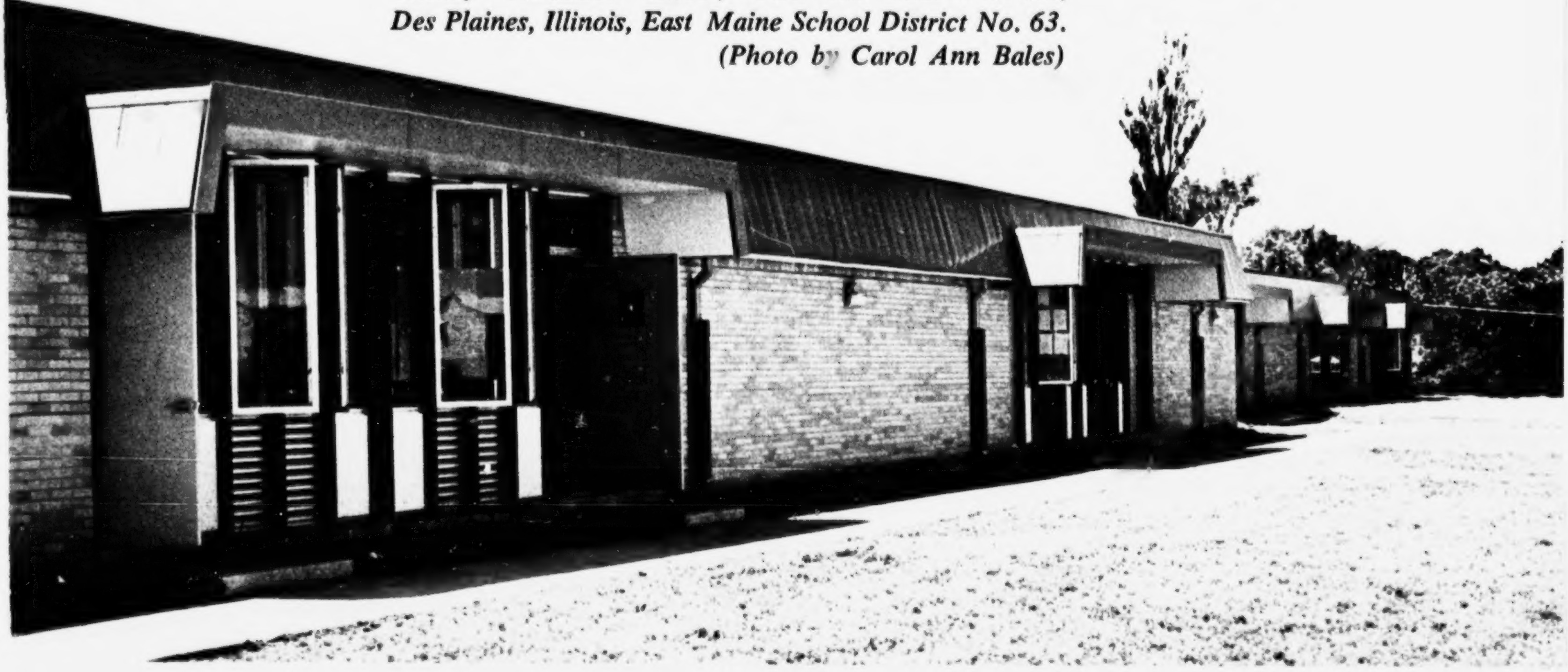
PHYSICAL FACILITIES FOR A NONGRADED SCHOOL


A
B
C
D
equal-sized rooms
E
F
G
H

A—One room—desks are clustered for small group activities—4 to 8 desks in each cluster.
B—Some desks arranged in hall—2's or 3's for tutoring.
C—One room—chairs only arranged to face one focus for A-V presentation.
D—One room—"sit upons" on floor arranged around small platform or center of attention.
E—One room—circles of 3 to 8 chairs.
F—One room—desks arranged around edge and in center for independent study.
G—One room—large tables for work; few or no chairs.
H—8 teachers desks and files for TPC.


1 floor/wing
small group and
independent study
1 floor/wing
large groups and
resource center
planning center
folding walls
TPC*
AV clerk
Entrance AV
*Teacher Planning Center

Shelley Nathanson School, Potter and Church Streets, Des Plaines, Illinois, East Maine School District No. 63. (Photo by Carol Ann Bales)



Teacher discussion at Nathanson becomes animated. Asked at a recent school board meeting if they would like to return to "old-fashioned education," team leaders from Nathanson replied with a definite "no." One teacher said she would feel "lonesome" now were she not a member of a teaching team. (Photo by Carol Ann Bales)

A team of teachers discusses organization of classes. They are free to utilize the large instructional room and three seminar rooms in whatever way they feel will be most beneficial for their students. Each team is scheduled 30 minutes a day to make lesson plans while their students have music and physical education classes. In addition, they usually eat lunch together, and this provides a chance for further discussion. (Photo by Carol Ann Bales)

SELF-CONTAINED STRUCTURES

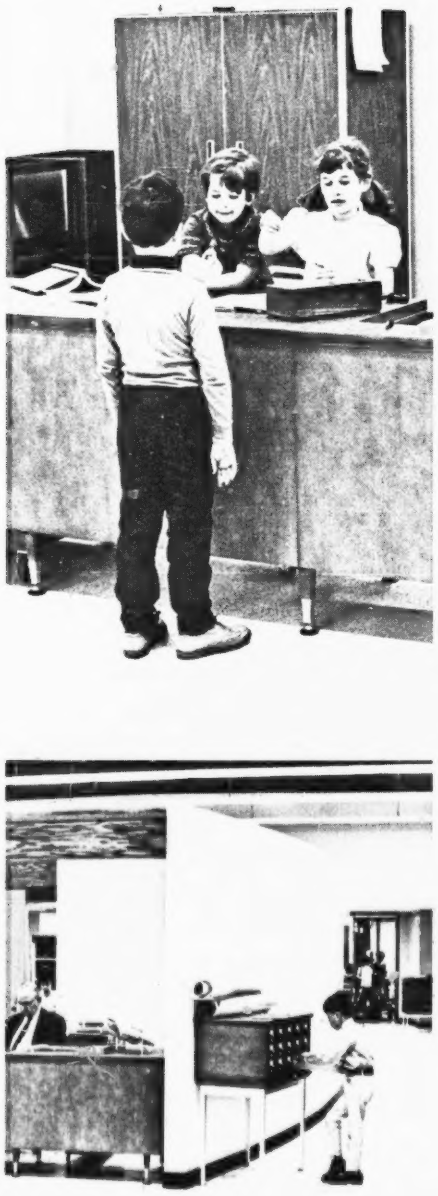
Let's first place the nongraded program in self-contained classroom structures. The major point of focus is that the school is learner-centered; it is designed to develop the learner as an individual and as a member of society. This means that the child will have opportunities to work with a large number of youngsters, with small groups, and sometimes alone. In self-contained classroom structures, one classroom can be set aside with no furniture. In this space, only temporary "sitting" arrangements are needed—children may sit on the floor or on the old camp "sit upons" or on patches of carpet. Another room can house your present desks or tables arranged for 5 to 15 youngsters so that small group or seminar activities may function. Still another classroom can be arranged with desks scattered not in rows but perhaps facing *away* from each other in a manner to indicate and support independent study. Thus, teachers and administrators can plan together for learning activities rather than for administrative convenience. Still another classroom can be set aside for teacher planning. These kinds of arrangements function in schools—from Massachusetts to California—in conventionally built buildings.

If there are non-weight-bearing walls, it is often possible for the administrator to persuade the district administration that such walls can be knocked out. Then, if the columns are attractively painted or covered with materials that can be used to display children's work, even larger groups can be accommodated or children can be seated on chairs rather than on the floor. In one such school, the basement contains a large room that is used for physical education. A small room that used to be a storage room was painted by youngsters and is to be attractively furnished for use by teachers as a private "put your feet up for a minute" kind of facility. The first floor contains several large rooms from which walls have been removed, and here creative activities are encouraged—activities such as creative rhythms, puppet shows with a demountable puppet stage, and drama. All these activities are fostered by a carpeted floor, a piano, record player, and rhythm instruments, but no other furnishings.

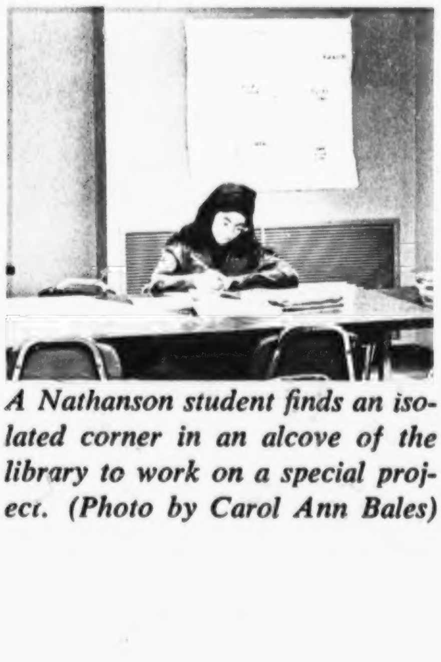
The second floor not only has the wall knocked out between two rooms, but the two walls that

A young Nathanson student goes through the card catalog in search of a desired book. (Photo by Carol Ann Bales)

A teacher at Nathanson School supervises small-size study groups in two of the three seminar rooms adjacent to a large instructional room which can in turn be sectioned in half. Teachers may use the cluster of classrooms as they see fit. (Photo by Carol Ann Bales)



Nathanson students select and check out their own books from open stacks in the instructional materials center which forms the core of the building. (Photos by Carol Ann Bales)



A Nathanson student finds an isolated corner in an alcove of the library to work on a special project. (Photo by Carol Ann Bales)

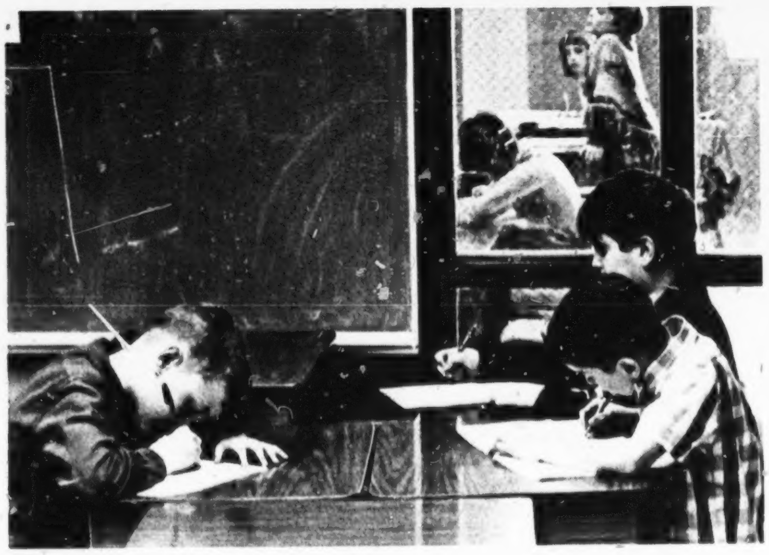
formed a hall have been removed. This makes a large, open, spacious library housing the games, audiovisual materials, and several rocking chairs. All of this is found in a normal two-story boxlike, formerly abandoned school building. And once you and your faculty and interested parents begin "redeployment," all kinds of creative arrangements can be made in your school.

A major consideration of the nongraded programs is the provision for the use of a variety of media and materials. For this, there are several approaches. One such approach provides for the use of library materials and audiovisual equipment in specific learning centers. For example, the mathematics area would house the pertinent books, films, filmstrips, recordings, manipulative materials, and the proper pieces of equipment for operation all in one particular spot. Another approach is to use one of the rooms, or, better still, three or four of the rooms, with walls removed, as a central resource center. Here the children may come at any time during the school day to seek references, pictures, audiovisual equipment, and models to use in independent study, in committee work, for reports to large groups and just because of a special interest. This central provision for resource materials helps to break the departmentalization that adults may tend to develop.

MODIFIED STRUCTURES

A number of new buildings designed for greater flexibility of school programs have utilized the folding wall. Some of these buildings are round, and walls between the segments of the "pie" can be opened or closed according to the learning activities designed for the children housed therein. There are rectangular buildings with similar kinds of interiors. These walls are relatively expensive, usually quite soundproof, but sometimes difficult to handle easily. Some of these folding walls are slatted, but these are not soundproof. Regardless of the ease of operation or the quality of the soundproofing, folding walls may be a great help or they may be a great crutch. Nongraded programs can be hampered by the ease with which the door can be closed. Other new school plants are designed to include large loft spaces. This cuts the initial cost of construction and, in addition, provides a built-in deterrent to self-containment. Teachers and children working in such loft spaces cannot help but be somewhat aware of activities in

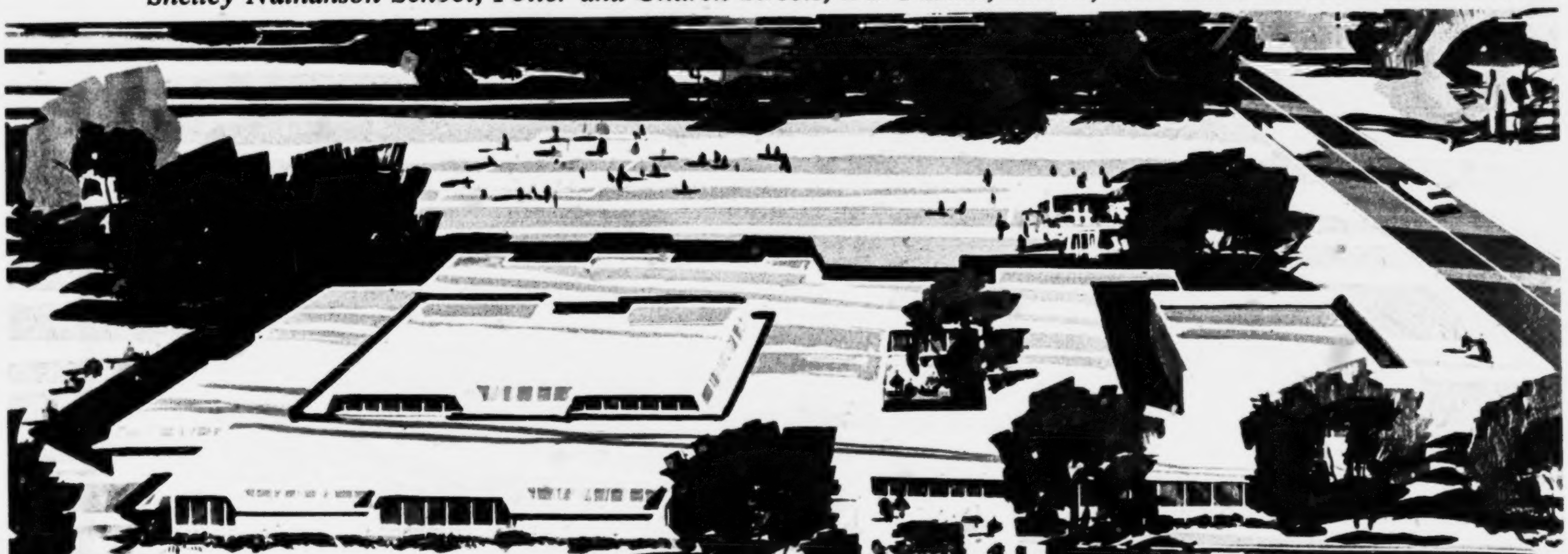
Members of a seminar class at Nathanson School discuss a social studies topic. Each teacher is free to form and disband groups whenever she feels her students are ready. She also determines the composition of these groups. Students also do individual work in the seminar rooms adjacent to the large instruction room. (Photo by Carol Ann Bales)



Nathanson students are encouraged to do in-depth study in the subject areas that interest them. Teachers are free to work with their students on an individual, small group, or large group basis.

Individual study carrels are provided for students in the instructional materials center where they may pursue individual work.

Shelley Nathanson School, Potter and Church Streets, Des Plaines, Illinois, East Maine School District No. 63.



other sections of the space, and this awareness can sharpen the quality of learning activity.

The physical structure of the Shelley Nathanson School in Des Plaines, Illinois, takes the form of six clusters of classrooms surrounding an instructional materials center which contains individual study carrels, library stacks, and filmstrips. (Students may check out their own books and filmstrips.) Each cluster contains one large instructional room which can be sectioned in half, and three adjoining seminar rooms.

The open library center, with not a single wall enclosing it, contains numerous rows of open book stacks in addition to 42 individual study carrels.

Independent study is encouraged at all levels, and each pupil is able to pursue, at his own depth of knowledge, a project related to the unit of work presently being studied.

Large group instruction at the Nathanson School may be used to:

- Introduce a unit of work
- Present a teacher or pupil demonstration
- View a particular film or filmstrip
- Listen to a guest speaker
- Present debates, panel discussions, or dramatic programs
- Clarify a particularly difficult concept
- Motivate children toward the study of a particular unit of work

The seminar provides the teacher with the opportunity to teach, in a small group situation, the skills and concepts related to the planned unit of work. The small group enables the teacher to better stimulate the students to discuss and to think critically.

Another example of floor space in a different design is the Lulu Walker School in the Amphitheater District, Tucson, Arizona. Here a variety of flexible spaces is evident.

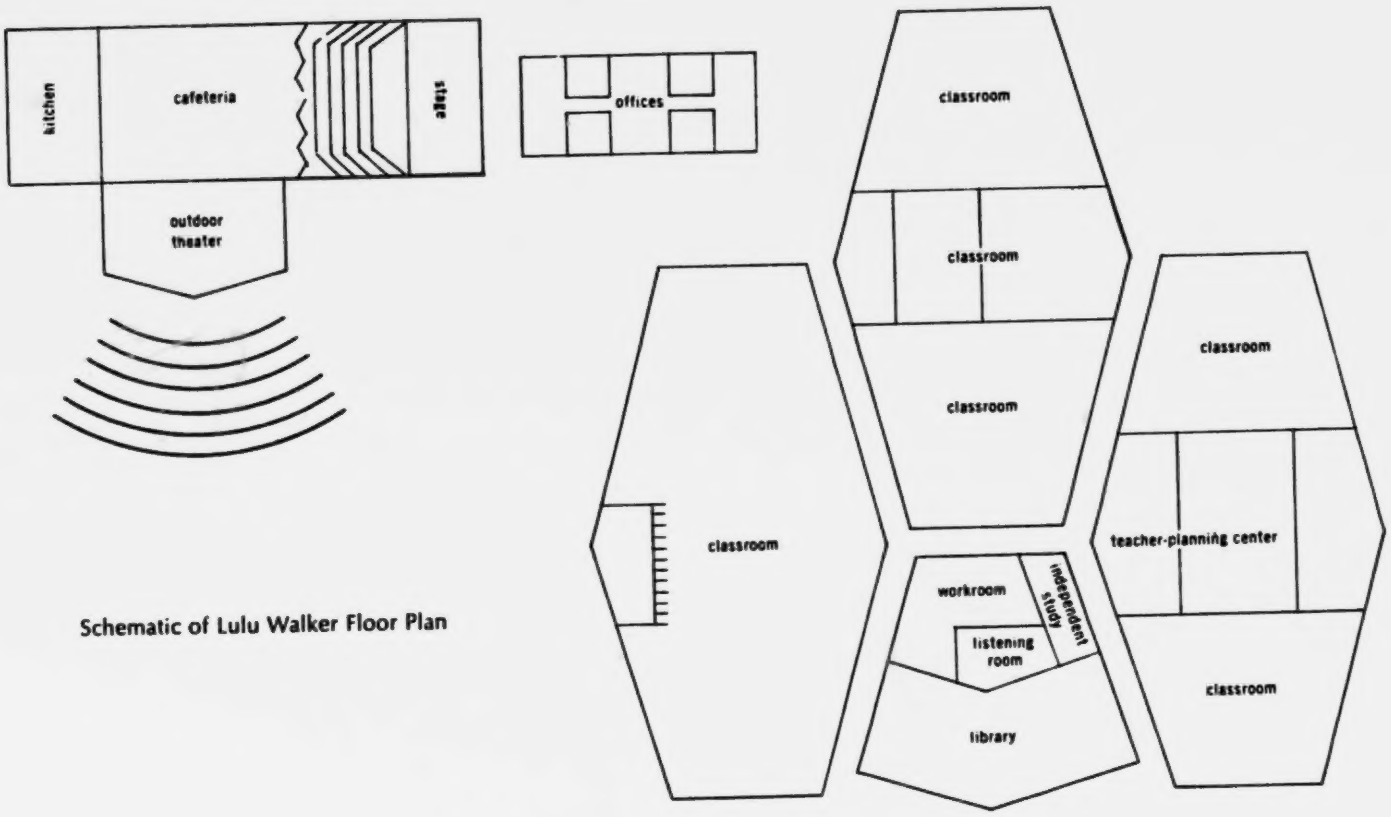
Regardless of the kind of plant in which your nongraded program will function, the important thing to remember is the following statement from Robert H. Anderson's article in the November issue of *The National Elementary Principal:*

Suitable provision is being made, in all aspects of the curriculum, for each unique child.

- This implies flexible grouping and subgrouping of pupils.
- It implies an adaptable, flexible curriculum.
- It implies a great range of materials and instructional approaches.

The discussion of the kinds of facilities and space that can support a nongraded program was written by Evelyn M. Carswell. She also provided the illustration from the Lulu Walker School in the Amphitheater District, Tucson, Arizona. Dr. Carswell was formerly Principal of the Lulu Walker School and is now Program Specialist, Center for the Study of Instruction, NEA.

Illustrations of the Shelley Nathanson School in Des Plaines, Illinois, and information about the plant and its use were provided by Frank A. Dagne, formerly Principal of the Shelley Nathanson School and now Assistant Superintendent of Schools, East Maine School District No. 63, Niles, Illinois.



Schematic of Lulu Walker Floor Plan

THE ADMINISTRATOR'S
WORK SHOP

A READING GROUP DISTRIBUTION BOARD

JEROME P. HOFMANN

IN our nongraded organization, which is structured around each child's reading instructional level, accurate up-to-date records for every child are imperative. At Aston Elementary School, located in the Penn-Delco Union School District, Green Ridge-Chester, Pennsylvania, a child's reading instructional level is the basic criterion for assignment to a given classroom. The child's chronological age, his emotional well-being, and his social development are other factors which are also considered carefully in the assignment of each pupil.

Early in our experience in the nongraded program, we recognized the need for a simple and practical method of showing the makeup of each class in a way that would make each child's reading level and year in school immediately apparent. After experimenting with various lists and charts, we finally agreed on a method which has proved to be very useful.

A section of pegboard measuring 12 x 6 feet

Jerome P. Hofmann is Chief School Administrator, East Whiteland Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania. At the time this article was written, he was Principal, Aston Elementary School, Green Ridge-Chester, Pennsylvania.

was installed on a wall in our reading specialist's office. String was used to divide the board vertically into classrooms and horizontally into reading levels. Small cards, sold commercially as class seating charts, were used to represent each reading group; coded colored tapes were used to designate each child's year in school. Each child's name is typed on a color-coded tag when he enters school, and this tag is used for the entire time the student is in our school. The color code, which designates a child's year in school, is changed each year to correspond to the child's new year in school. The name tag does not have to be changed.

Some of the advantages of such a reading board are:

1. When a child's progress indicates that he should move to a different reading group, the various groups to which he can be transferred are quickly apparent. When the decision is made, the child's name tag is moved to indicate the change in placement. The job of crossing out names, adding new names, or retyping student lists is eliminated.

2. The number of children in each reading level is quickly ascertained by looking across the board horizontally. This information is essential in charting the reading progress during the current year and valuable when determining how many textbooks, workbooks, and other instructional materials must be ordered for the following year.

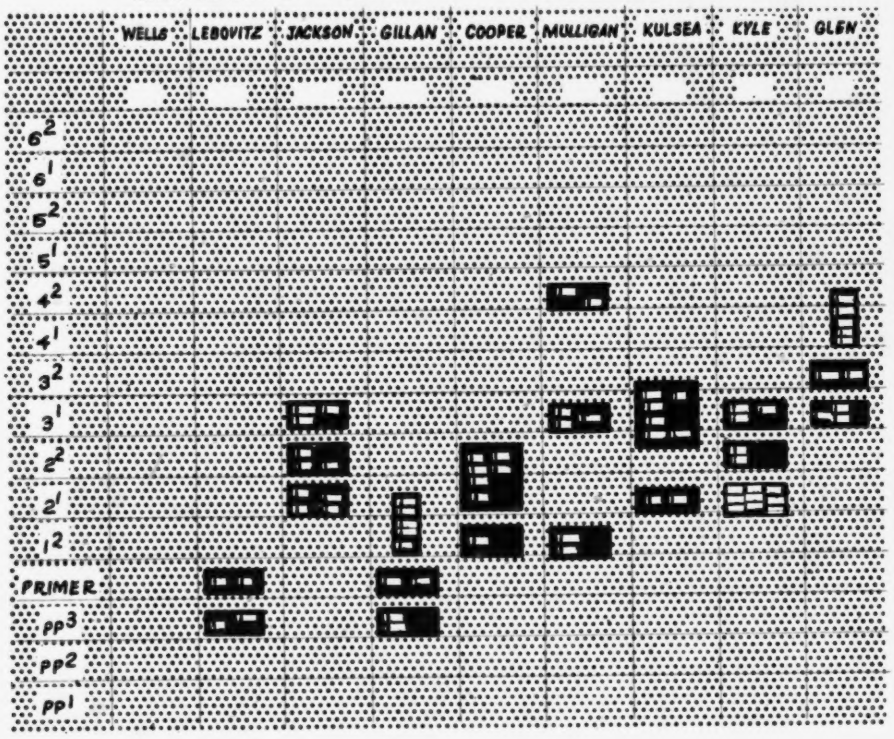
3. The class size, the size of each reading group, and the chronological ages of the children in the class can be quickly determined by looking at the vertical columns.

4. When the teachers meet with our reading specialist to discuss a child who seems to be misplaced, everyone involved can consult the same board and share in the decision.

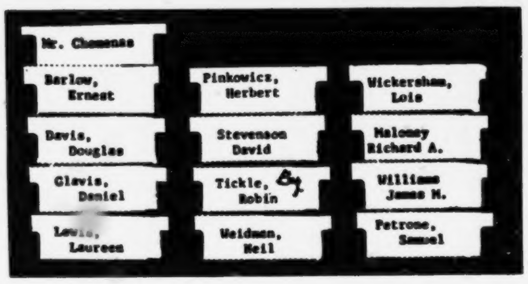
5. In May, when work begins on the assignment of children for September, the tags of children who are going to the junior high school are removed. Work then begins on re-aligning the remaining reading groups into classes. The reading group cards, with removable name tags, allow much flexibility and facilitate extended experimentation until the best possible instructional grouping is achieved.

The reading group distribution board is one way to show the children's reading instructional levels at a glance. We have found it effective and extremely useful, and we offer the idea for your consideration.

READING GROUP DISTRIBUTION


WELLS
LEBOVITZ
JACKSON
GILLAN
COOPER
MULLIGAN
KULSEA
KYLE
GLEN
6^2
6^1
5^2
5^1
4^2
4^1
3^2
3^1
2^2
2^1
1^2
PRIMER
pp^3
pp^2
pp^1

YEAR IN SCHOOL KEY
1966-67
1st Year Children
2nd Year Children
3rd Year Children
4th Year Children
5th Year Children
6th Year Children
7th Year Children


Mr. Chomenas
Barlow, Ernest
Davis, Douglas
Glavis, Daniel
Lewis, Laureen
Pinkowicz, Herbert
Stevenson David
Tickle, Robin
Weidman, Neil
Wickersham, Lois
Maloney Richard A.
Williams James M.
Petrone, Samuel

FROM KINDERGARTEN TO WHAT?

JOHN I. THOMAS

A TIME for searching, discovering, experiencing. Good kindergarten teachers have long recognized that such time is essential to the self-fulfillment of children. Opportunity to test, to contradict—even to conspire! Two children plotting a shopping center to be constructed. Several outfitting themselves with shapeless costumes in preparation for some drama yet to come. A child quietly looking at a picture book, the secrets of which are revealed to him, and to him alone. Still another child intently observing ants at work through the glass of the "ant farm." Two children riveting eyes to microscopes as they observe amoebas. And over in the book corner, a small group of youngsters, eyes aglow and ears sensitized, listening to the teacher as she reads of another world. New ideas generated, curiosity extended. Each child finding his own way, in his own time, according to his own needs. Disorder may reign momentarily in this deskless environment, and individual worlds may well collide. But out of this a structuring for knowledge, a building of something together emerges. This is the world of the kindergartener.

Learning in the kindergarten is a gradual process of integration as more and more experiences are accumulated by the learner. The child is encouraged to pursue interests in terms of his own capacities and inclinations. Activities are viewed as meaning something to him. Experiences are valued. In the kindergarten, behavioral growth is looked upon as an everchanging process. Children fluctuate in form and shape as they reach into worlds, real and imaginary. Intrinsic needs and drives are fulfilled as they talk and confront, try out different avenues and modes of expression, and invite old and new ideas. And for every step they take, another idea, configuration, or direction emerges. As assumptions are penetrated, relationships derived, and imaginations stretched, greater insight and knowledge is the inevitable result.

From kindergarten to what? Contrast the kindergarten with the more formal environment of the first grade, the second grade, the third grade—where children are classified, compartmentalized, and prescribed for. All too often the child's first contact in the new learning environment is with rigid, row-by-row desks which restrict movement and prohibit dialogue among their occupants. Indeed, in many instances one rightfully assumes that the rigid rows are there by design—design which insists upon treating unequals as equals. Homogenize them, mold them. This is the thing to do, you know. "After all, aren't they all 6 years old in the first grade, 7 years old in the second grade?" It matters little that values, experiences, and perceptions based upon experiences differ from child to child. This is the way it has been done, and this is the way it will continue to be done. "We must be doing it right. They do go on to graduate, don't they?" So administrators continue to prescribe, teachers continue to tell, and students continue to drop out.

In the persistent quest for "objectivity," the sensitivities and honest-to-goodness feelings of school children are being ignored increasingly. The hunch, the desire, the pursuit of one's own interest is fast disappearing from the elementary school. As enrollments increase and classes get larger, far too many administrators are turning to standardized tests in their attempts to provide appropriate programs for students. This makes it "easier" for them to place children. Viewing the results of standardized tests as a means for admitting, classifying, and redeploying students, many

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administrators pay little attention to the over-all effect on those concerned. As often as not, administrative edicts clearly point out to teachers that children are to be viewed as statistics. Thus students scoring within particular percentile ranges find themselves grouped with students whose test results are similar. Placement is inflexible to the extent that children become members of "slow," "average," "high" groups. And they are classified this way throughout their school life, irrespective of objectives appropriate for them.

Few administrators are willing to take the time to institute elementary school programs based upon bona fide diagnosis of children's academic potential, experiences, and interests. Tests are not enough. Most standardized tests, in fact, don't measure their own stated objectives, let alone those held desirable by instructional staffs. What's needed is a more specific strategy for identifying the learning potential of children so that school experiences are provided them in terms of what they value. Ostensibly, serious questions need to be raised—questions in terms of assumptions or hypotheses we have relative to teaching, learning, curriculum, and students. Beliefs to be explored or tested, for example, might include the following:

1. Not all teachers are all things to all children.
2. Teachers and students vary in talents, interests, and attitudes.
3. Children perceive differently, thus learn differently.
4. Learning is generated at different rates, under differing conditions, in differing environments, for different students.
5. Formal education, if it is to generate optimum learning, should provide for continuous progress, uninterrupted by barriers of walls, space, materials, and grades.

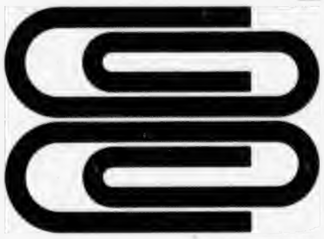
Educators have long given lip service to these tenets, but little has been done in terms of constructing models which would test the validity of these tenets. Thus the "what" of the educational program beyond the kindergarten years continues to function on the basis of classification and compartmentalization of children via standardized tests. Many would believe, in fact, that we've become so academically sterile that we must resort to these alone. Consequently, many schools operate with the view that students must be grouped together in teams of percentile scores. Those who are responsible for grouping look upon achievement as the all-important criterion for proper diagnosis and placement of students.

Implicit in any institutional model for instruction and learning which is concerned with diagnosis is the raising of specific questions relative to the curriculum, the experiences of children, and the roles of the staff. These may well take the following form:

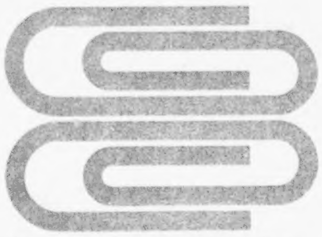
1. What objectives are appropriate for each learner?
2. What is the learner's position relative to these objectives? How can we find out? How can we put our findings to work?
3. Who's going to do what with which children?
4. What learning arrangements are needed?
5. Are peer groups a factor in learning? Do they motivate or retard the learner?
6. What is the teacher's role in the learning process? Is there a specifically appropriate teacher for the learner at a specific time?
7. To what reward system does the learner respond?
8. What is his degree of toleration? What is his learning style?
9. Did the experiences planned for the learner benefit him? If not, why not? If so, why?
10. What's the next step for the learner?

Questions such as these are essential to proper diagnosis and appropriate placement of students in the total program. Once they become ritual, rather than sporadic, we become more closely attuned to the individual needs and inclination of children and better able to set the stage for the kind of organization that is needed for putting beliefs into action.

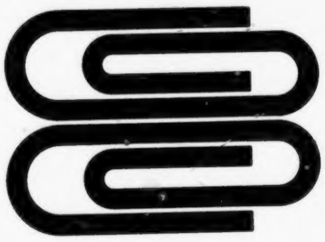
The challenge is great. School administrators can provide a teaching and learning environment suggested by the results of rigid standardized tests. Or they can create an environment in which children are encouraged to pursue their interests in terms of their own capacities and what is meaningful to them. What is the best possible direction for each of the learners? From kindergarten to what? The "what" in too many of the nation's schools is not consonant with what is known about children, about principles of learning, and about appropriate experiences which tie the two together.



A NONGRADED



MIDDLE SCHOOL



ROBERT J. McCARTHY

LIVERPOOL, New York, is a suburb of Syracuse with a pupil enrollment of approximately 9,000. Until recently, its schools were divided into three traditional units—elementary, junior high, and high school. Under the clear light of analysis, such arrangements were not entirely satisfactory. The graded junior high school approach, in particular, did not seem to be as effective as it might be in reaching children in the 11 to 15 age bracket. Ninth graders seemed to be intellectually and socially alienated from the younger junior high school students; sixth-grade youngsters appeared to have more in common with seventh and eighth graders.

The ideal solution would have been to group all grades, K-12, in one large building. This would have allowed an ungraded approach to function in a supportive setting. But such an arrangement was out of the question at the time for the Liverpool school district, so we chose what seemed to be the next best alternative—an ungraded middle school.

The Liverpool district's 7-8-9 arrangement was failing to meet the social, emotional, and curricular needs of its ninth-grade pupils in a number of ways. For example, we did not have enough personnel and equipment for in-depth laboratory investigations in various fields of science which ninth-grade level students were ready to pursue. We could provide only a limited choice of foreign languages in the junior high schools, and we lacked adequate vocational and professional programs. Moreover, we clearly faced certain limitations in remedying the situation.

We realized that it would be far too costly to duplicate the facilities and the program offering of the existing junior high schools for a single grade. And while it would be physically possible to develop numerous challenging programs in the four-year high school with its enrollment of 2,200 pupils, it was out of the question for the ninth grade. Furthermore, we realized that our elementary schools were not able to satisfy the demands of our sixth-grade pupils, particularly in science, industrial arts, home economics, foreign languages, and physical education.

In view of all these factors, we decided to place

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the sixth grade with seventh and eighth grades and to create a middle school. Liverpool's middle school attempted to develop an organizational framework well suited to the young adolescent. This necessitated combining much of the elementary school's concern for the "whole" child with that of the secondary school's emphasis on achievement in content areas—no easy task, but one that had to be done. An ungraded approach plus the interdisciplinary teaming of teachers and students helped us accomplish this goal by guaranteeing the flexibility necessary for developing an individualized program for each student.

Why Ungraded?

Parents know that each of their children is unique. And administrators and teachers have always recognized that every child comes to school with a different background, different experiences, different interests, different perceptions, and different abilities. Although few will dispute this contention, little has been done to organize our schools in such a way that each student will have a different program—one suited to him and his needs. We tend to build the master schedule and then try to fit the child to the program. This condition will probably prevail as long as we adhere slavishly to the graded approach.

The graded system is based on the assumption that each child progresses at almost the same pace as other children of the same age. Following this line of reasoning, all students should profit from taking the same subjects, in a set order, year after year. But various forms of psychological testing, as well as the personal experiences of every teacher, have proved this assumption to be false. Also, youngsters learn in a variety of ways and in a variety of patterns, alternately spurting ahead and slowing down as their minds and bodies develop at different rates.

Such variations in physical and intellectual growth patterns must be reflected in programs being developed for these students. Some youngsters may best pursue a concept or develop certain skills by means of a sequential approach; others may comprehend similar concepts or develop similiar skills by utilizing a somewhat disjointed intuitive approach to the topic. The important thing is that the students be permitted to learn in ways which are most suited to their current operational patterns.

Realizing that much of today's traditional organizational pattern is neither adequate nor fair to many of our students, the Liverpool school system decided to change rather than perpetuate error by remaining with an outmoded graded system. Ungradedness is necessary if American educators are to meet the challenge of educating masses of children while at the same time providing instruction which enables each student to learn at his own rate and which takes into account each student's interests and abilities.

Once outside the school, children associate with other children of all ages. They do this because of mutual interests and desires. But as soon as they enter our schools, these associations are broken up by artificial grade barriers. Teachers attempt to regroup within the various grades and classes, but the fragmentary "grade" organization makes this extremely difficult. Ungradedness provides the vital ingredient of flexibility which is needed to develop individual programs for students.

Our ungraded program attempts to form groups of students on the basis of their needs in various areas. With this approach, for example, a so-called sixth level youngster with a talent in the area of mathematics might be placed in a mathematics class with the most advanced and mature students in the middle school, but he would still remain with many of his own age group for some or all of his other program. The student is placed with new groups when his progress indicates the need for reassignment.

At this point, it cannot be emphasized too strongly that the students are studying various concepts and skills in the areas of English, social studies, art, music—*not* seventh-grade English, sixth-grade mathematics, and eighth-grade music. There is really no such thing as sixth- or seventh- or eighth-grade English, Educators refer to it in this way because it happens to be listed this way in a state syllabus or curriculum guide. In an ungraded structure, the student will study English concepts and skills, and progress as rapidly as he can along a pattern of development that is most appropriate for him. Some may move through a sequence rather quickly; others may need substantially more time. But to have this continuous progress you need nongradedness.

To summarize, an ungraded approach recognizes that:

1. Each child is different.
2. Each child can benefit from a program built especially for him.
3. Learning is a process involving certain steps which may vary in their complexity and may not follow a fixed pattern.
4. The order in which these steps are taken and the rapidity of movement from one step to another will vary with the individual.

The student in our ungraded, individualized program is allowed to grow in many ways according to his unique talents, abilities, and interests, without the interference of the "grade" barrier. To enable him to make continuous progress in his educational development, the student is guided by his counselor and his instructional team.

Interdisciplinary Teaming

In order to facilitate ungradedness in the Liverpool Middle School, six interdisciplinary teams were established for the 1966-67 school year. Except for changes in personnel, the structure has remained the same for the second year of our middle school operation. Five of these teams consisted of one English, one social studies, one mathematics, and one science teacher per team. Because we identified approximately 45 youngsters who had severe learning problems but possessed normal intellectual capabilities, we also set up a special three-member team composed of talented individuals who were interested in working very closely with these students.

Teachers were assigned to teams on the basis of inter-personal compatibility as well as balanced intellectual strengths. A series of conferences was held in January 1966 with members of the staff who would be working in our middle school. The discussions were frank. Our leadership team, which consists of the principal, the instructional consultant, and the pupil personnel consultant, wanted to find out from the staff themselves not only what they thought about interdisciplinary teaming but also how they felt about working with some of their colleagues.

It was obvious that the only workable basis for the teaming of teachers was their willingness to work together, and their desire—or lack of it—to attempt the "new." Alternately teams were created that were either "experimental" or "traditional" in their approaches to education.

When interviewing candidates, we specifically sought individuals with "young" minds—people who felt that they did not have the answers to everything but who were willing to try to find some good answers. Our screening process immediately eliminated from consideration those candidates who were primarily subject matter oriented. Since the primary function of the interdisciplinary team was to develop a close personal relationship with the students, it was essential that we secure the services of individuals who would initiate programs to fit the students, rather than force youngsters to conform to a previously established curriculum pattern unrelated to their needs, interests, and abilities.

Each interdisciplinary team, with the exception of the previously mentioned three-member team, was responsible for the instruction of approximately 110 students in the areas of English, social studies, mathematics, and science. Members of each team were also responsible for developing the reading skills necessary for comprehending the ideas being developd within the team. All members of a particular team had the same students, and also served as the homeroom teachers for these students.

Originally we thought that a team leader would be essential to the proper functioning of each team. But, as the year progressed, it became evident that such a position was unnecessary; various members of each team were assuming leadership positions as situations dictated.

In order for each interdisciplinary team to function effectively, it was necessary for team members to have a great deal of information at their disposal regarding all of the children on their team. A questionnaire completed by the previous year's teachers, plus valuable information obtained by our guidance department from test scores and parent-teacher conferences, was presented to the team to give them a fairly comprehensive picture of each individual student. Before school opened, our youngsters were placed with teams on the basis of the data that had been gathered.

Grouping

At this point, it seems appropriate to compare the methods we used for grouping students during our first year as a middle school with our new grouping procedure.

Initially teacher ratings were used to categorize pupils as 1-excellent, 2-good, 3-fair, and 4-poor in the areas of mathematics, science, social studies, and English. Having accomplished this, and having decided upon the makeup of each interdisciplinary team, it then became necessary to determine which teams could best handle certain groups of youngsters. Such decisions had to be made if the program was to be successful.

The eventual team and student assignments are summarized below. Note that the summary shows ability levels, and grade levels as traditionally conceived.

Team 1	ability levels	1-2-3	experimental
	grade levels	6-7-8	
Team 2	ability levels	2-3	experimental
	grade levels	6-7	
Team 3	ability levels	1-2-3	experimental
	grade levels	6-7-8	
Team 4	ability levels	2-3-4	traditional
	grade levels	6-8	
Team 5	ability levels	2-3	experimental
	grade levels	7-8	
Team 6	ability levels	2-3-4	traditional
	grade levels	6-7-8	

These numerical data regarding student rating and team capabilities, combined with the choices students made in the elective areas of art, music, home economics, industrial arts, band, orchestra, chorus, French, and Spanish, were fed into a computer. Students were then placed with what, at the time, seemed to be their appropriate team and in those elective subjects which were open to them. As the year progressed, we found the operation to be anything but satisfactory. We were attempting to develop a personalized program of instruction and yet we had grouped youngsters in a manner that led to the very antithesis of what we were striving to achieve.

In June 1967, we asked each teacher to write a detailed evaluation of each of his students in terms of the progress made during the year. Our leadership team, guided in large measure by these evaluative reports and their own recommendations gained from counseling sessions with the students, worked for six weeks during the summer prior to the start of our second year to place each student individually with the interdisciplinary team most capable of working with that particular individual. In addition to this, we scheduled each youngster individually in those elective resource areas that he had an interest in and that would be of benefit to him. This was an exhausting operation but an essential one, and it was definitely in keeping with our educational philosophy. We did, however, make use of our district's data processing center to print out team and homeroom lists, plus student listings for the various resource areas.

Once teachers and students had been assigned to teams, a host of other situations had to be created in order for the interdisciplinary team to function effectively. We had to provide time during the school day for the team to meet and discuss their students and their programs. We had to give content or subject matter teams the opportunity to coordinate all that was going on in the various interdisciplinary teams. Finally, we had to set aside time for the students to work with their teachers on a one-to-one basis.

Since it was the responsibility of each interdisciplinary team to constantly group and regroup its students in the four major subject matter areas, it was obvious that a common planning room and a common planning period were essential. This would serve as the team's headquarters where all meetings would take place. The teachers could arrange the room any way they wished. Each facility was initially equipped with four desks and four chairs, file cabinets, a large closet, and several soft lounge chairs and/or a sofa.

Teams 1, 2, and 3 had their planning periods in the afternoon; teams 4, 5, and 6 had their meetings in the morning. Initially our building leadership team had to urge teachers to regroup pupils on the basis of the students' interests, ability, achievement, competency in various areas, maturity, and the special needs of the individual. As the year progressed, more staff members began to see the necessity for this and took the initiative themselves.

In September 1966, all our youngsters were grouped in their various subject matter areas and computer scheduled into specific rooms for definite times with members of their team. This was done to minimize confusion for our staff and for the students new to our building and our program. As we began our second year in September 1967, this became unnecessary because our district had set aside sufficient funds to support a one-week building workshop for the entire staff. In addition to this, all teachers new to our school and to the district were involved in a four-week professional development program that explored such concepts as nongradedness, continuous progress, independent study, individualized instruction, and the philosophy and psychology of teaming. Sufficient time was allotted to staff for reviewing all information pertinent to the students assigned to their team. Each team was then able to develop preliminary individual pupil schedules, groupings, and room assignments before the youngsters arrived.

In initial meetings of teachers and students, diagnostic pretesting took place. This enabled us to further identify groups of students, regardless of age, who were at a similar point in learning for a particular discipline area. Once students with such similarities were identified, along with the various levels of understanding that they had achieved, the team could begin to create the types of programs these students needed. Thus, after evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their pupils, the team would create classes in which pupils would be working with others who had arrived at approximately the same level of proficiency and maturity in a certain subject matter area.

The members of each interdisciplinary team also serve as the homeroom teachers for their students, thus building an even closer bond between students and teachers. Much has been published about teaming, and the greatest stress has been laid upon large group and small group instruction, seminars, and the use of audiovisual materials. Many of the studies have neglected to mention one of the prime reasons for teaming a group of teachers—to help them get to know their students. By establishing interdisciplinary teams, by using these same team members as homeroom teachers, and by providing time during the day for students to meet with their teachers individually or in small groups, a climate was created whereby the teacher could act as counselor and advisor to the student.

Another significant reason for the formation of interdisciplinary teams was to help to correlate and integrate various subject matter areas. This eliminated needless duplication of effort on the part of staff and, more important, allowed students to see definite relationships between subject matter areas. By teaming teachers from various subject matter areas, we also enabled each staff member to see what was going on outside his own specialty area. We could then integrate topics and concepts so that the student and the teacher received a total view of what was taking place. Such knowledge and such an approach to learning could only improve our educational program. The mechanical operations of the team can be illustrated further by two team schedules:

Team 1

7:50 - 8:25	Content teams. Planning sessions.
8:30 - 8:45	Homeroom.
8:50 - 11:50	Interdisciplinary team teaching in English, social studies, mathematics, science, and reading. Staff arranges the time and the place where the pupils will receive instruction.
11:55 - 12:35	Lunch.
12:40 - 1:35	Interdisciplinary team planning period.
1:40 - 2:40	Individual pupil instruction period. An extra help session.
2:45 - 2:55	Homeroom.

Team 4

7:50 - 8:25	Content teams. Planning sessions.
8:30 - 8:45	Homeroom.
8:50 - 9:45	Interdisciplinary team planning period.
9:50 - 10:50	Individual pupil instruction period. An extra help session.
10:55 - 11:35	Lunch.
11:40 - 2:40	Interdisciplinary team teaching in English, social studies, mathematics, science, and reading.
2:45 - 2:55	Homeroom.

The team usually meets with students for a three-hour block of time each day. The teachers, however, have the freedom to do what they wish with those three hours. This is essential if the team is to be able to regroup students constantly for various instructional purposes. It would have been simple to divide the three hours into four 45-minute segments—and such an arrangement did prevail during the first week of school while the children were adjusting to their new teachers and to a new building. But such unimaginative calculations are not typical nor are they encouraged.

After the first few days it was expected that, with the students, each team would develop its own schedule. This had to be done to create optimum conditions for the showing of films in their entirety, to conduct lengthy laboratory experiments, and to have the opportunity to listen to and talk with visitors to the schools. Once having agreed on the schedule to be employed for a day or for a week, it was essential that the students be informed of this decision. Since the members of the team were also the homeroom teachers of these students, it appeared that this could be accomplished rather easily during the homeroom period by giving the pupils a copy of their new schedule.

As school began last fall, each interdisciplinary team had:

1. Its own planning room
2. A common planning period for all members of the team
3. A period of time set aside during which the teachers could meet on an individual basis with their students
4. The freedom to arrange the three-hour block of time as needs dictate
5. The encouragement to constantly regroup students within the team and to transfer them to other teams when this seemed desirable
6. The go-ahead to develop individualized programs for students, based on the results of initial pretesting and student interests
7. Time to meet with other interdisciplinary teams and with their own subject matter or content teams.

Each team is assuming a considerable amount of responsibility, and the staff is being given clearance to tackle a great many of the problems that directly affect them. Teachers have an opportunity to operate in this way because we believe that for any organization to function effectively, the members of that organization must be willing to assume leadership in certain activities under the guidance of the leadership team. Since schools exist for students, these youngsters could and must influence the programs we offer. It follows that teachers, who help to educate these youngsters, should also influence the operation of the school. No administrative team could run the whole show itself and shouldn't try to.

Continuous Progress Report Form

With the implementation of an interdisciplinary team, nongraded, continuous progress approach to students and instruction, the inadequacies of our A-B-C-D-F report card were very much in evidence. Members of our staff, along with the leadership teams of the other two middle schools in the district, decided to launch an attack on the problem. The results of their six-month study led directly to the board's adoption of a continuous progress reporting system to students, their parents, and future teachers.

In analyzing the existing reporting system and developing plans for a new one, the staff felt that a system should be devised that:

1. Is used by individual teachers when appropriate and not just at uniformly prescribed times such as every five or ten weeks
2. Describes the student's program
3. Indicates the student's present achievement in terms of his ability
4. Recognizes that neither ability nor achievement is necessarily static and that both may change as the student matures physically and intellectually
5. Acknowledges achievement in terms of the student's self-development, rather than just in terms of a letter grade. (See reporting form on page 21.)

By allowing each teacher to issue this report when the exploration of a particular concept or topic has been completed, the staff no longer will be under the gun to have their grade sheets in the principal's office by a certain date. If a teacher is writing only ten or twenty reports at a time, he will be able to devote more time, effort, and thought to his evaluation of the individual's progress. This is exactly what the report is designed to do. The focus of our program and our reporting system must be the individual student. Although staff members are expected to complete at least one such report on each of their students during each ten-week period of the school year, teachers have the opportunity to select the most appropriate time for its issuance.

By employing a three-part form we were able to provide the student and his parents, the guidance counselor, and the interdisciplinary team with a thorough picture of the youngster's program and his progress in terms of the program, as related to the student's own ability. As much as possible, we also attempt to schedule parent conferences when such reports are issued.

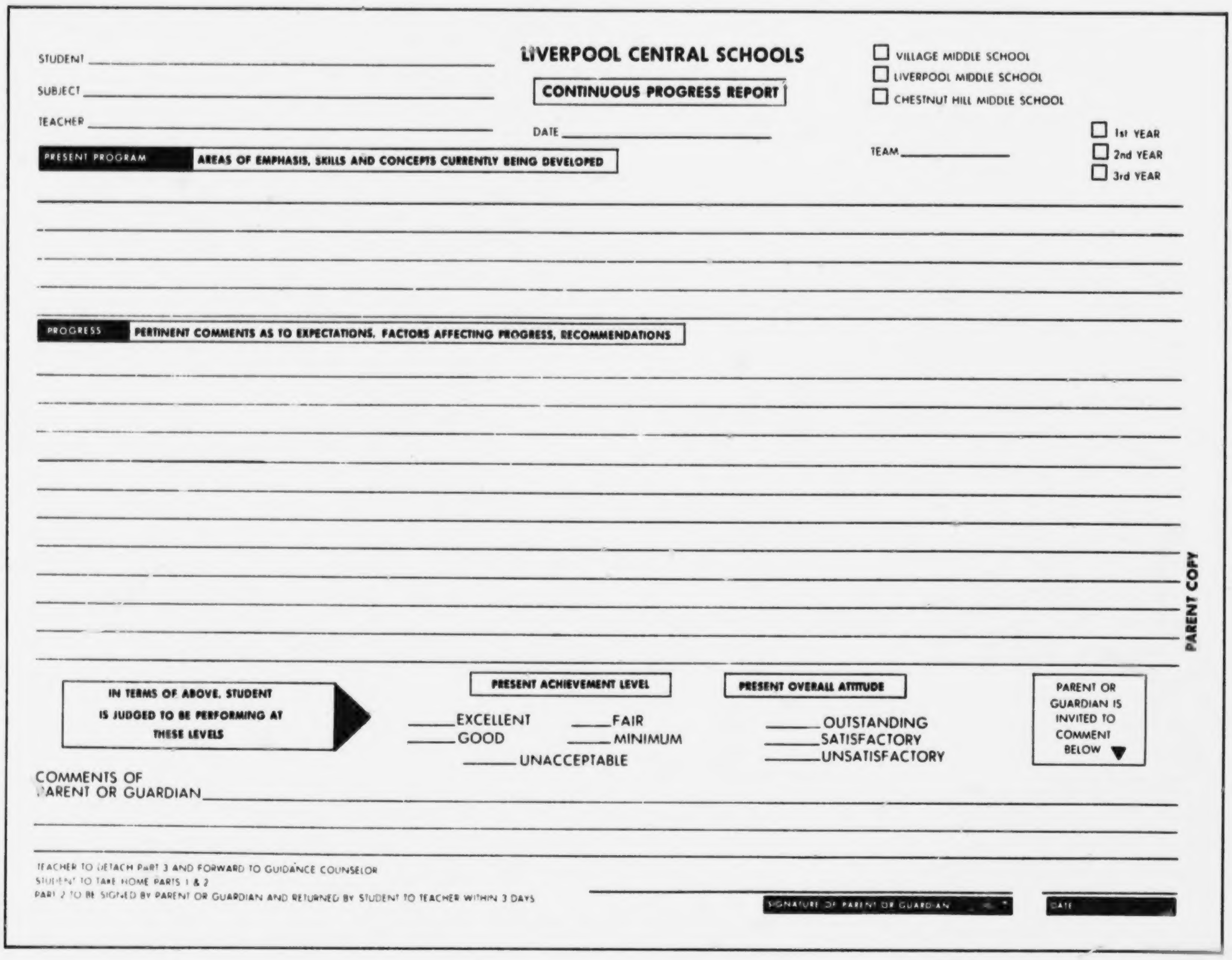
It is our belief that this system has these advantages over many other reporting systems:

1. It provides ample space for teachers to make appropriate comments concerning each student, rather than relying on the trite clichés available on most checklist reporting devices.

2. It provides teachers with enough time to do a careful job on each report, since not all of the reports will be prepared at the same time.

3. It provides parents, students, counselors, and future teachers with some idea of the concepts that the student has worked with and the degree to which these concepts have been grasped.

The interdisciplinary teams, the flexibility with which they can operate, and the responsibility given to staff to both develop and evaluate individualized student programs exist for one major purpose: to allow the Liverpool Middle School to seek continually for new and better methods that will enable each youngster to progress according to his own ability, interest, talent, and drive.



STUDENT ____________________

SUBJECT ____________________

TEACHER ____________________

LIVERPOOL CENTRAL SCHOOLS

CONTINUOUS PROGRESS REPORT

DATE ____________

☐ VILLAGE MIDDLE SCHOOL
☐ LIVERPOOL MIDDLE SCHOOL
☐ CHESTNUT HILL MIDDLE SCHOOL

TEAM ____________

☐ 1st YEAR
☐ 2nd YEAR
☐ 3rd YEAR

PRESENT PROGRAM **AREAS OF EMPHASIS, SKILLS AND CONCEPTS CURRENTLY BEING DEVELOPED**

PROGRESS **PERTINENT COMMENTS AS TO EXPECTATIONS, FACTORS AFFECTING PROGRESS, RECOMMENDATIONS**

IN TERMS OF ABOVE, STUDENT IS JUDGED TO BE PERFORMING AT THESE LEVELS

PRESENT ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL

____ EXCELLENT
____ GOOD
____ FAIR
____ MINIMUM
____ UNACCEPTABLE

PRESENT OVERALL ATTITUDE

____ OUTSTANDING
____ SATISFACTORY
____ UNSATISFACTORY

PARENT OR GUARDIAN IS INVITED TO COMMENT BELOW ▼

COMMENTS OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN ____________________

TEACHER TO DETACH PART 3 AND FORWARD TO GUIDANCE COUNSELOR
STUDENT TO TAKE HOME PARTS 1 & 2
PART 2 TO BE SIGNED BY PARENT OR GUARDIAN AND RETURNED BY STUDENT TO TEACHER WITHIN 3 DAYS

SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN

DATE

PARENT COPY

THE NONGRADED SCHOOL:

SOME CURRENT QUESTIONS

A new tape on the nongraded school, *The Nongraded School: Some Current Questions,* may be ordered from the Department of Elementary School Principals. The tape runs for approximately forty minutes and is available at a cost of $6.50.

The recorded discussion is focused on some of the questions about the nongraded school that are frequently raised by principals and teachers. The questions are discussed by Robert H. Anderson, Professor of Education, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, and Evelyn M. Carswell, Program Specialist, Center for the Study of Instruction, NEA. Both Dr. Anderson and Dr. Carswell have written articles for the November issue of *The National Elementary Principal* on the nongraded school.

The following questions and comments were presented to Dr. Anderson and Dr. Carswell for their reaction and discussion:

1. Let's start with a brief discussion of what is meant by a nongraded school. Obviously, nongraded schools are different from graded schools. But how are they different? What are the distin-

guishing characteristics of a nongraded school?

2. How many schools today are nongraded?

3. Frequently we hear references to "so-called nongraded schools." Why is this? What is meant?

4. What does research say about the effectiveness of the nongraded school in comparison with the graded school?

5. Schools are for children, of course. It's pretty clear that you believe a nongraded school can offer more to a child than a graded school can. Why? What difference does it make to a child?

6. If a program is highly individualized what happens to competition among children? Don't children need the pressure of competition if they are to make progress and move ahead?

7. Where does grouping of children fit into the nongraded program?

8. If you have a nongraded program how do you report progress to parents and to children?

9. Are some of the techniques that are being used to report pupil progress in the nongraded school also appropriate in schools that are graded?

10. There is much mobility within our population today. What happens when a pupil who has been in a graded school transfers to a school that is nongraded? What can the principals and teachers do in this situation?

11. What happens when a child moves from a nongraded school to a graded school? What can the principal and teachers do for this child—and his parents?

12. How does teaching in a nongraded school differ from teaching in a graded school—or does it?

13. Are nongrading and team teaching alternatives? Or can you have both?

14. Are the responsibilities of the principal of a nongraded school different from those of the principal of a graded school? If so, how are they different?

15. What are some of the things that get in the way of moving from the traditional graded school to the nongraded school?

16. Suppose a school staff is dissatisfied with its present program and is interested in moving to a nongraded program. What are some of the steps that might be taken?

17. What if some staff members are enthusiastic about developing a nongraded program and others are either negative or somewhat skeptical? What should the principal do? Should he drop the idea completely? Should he defer it? Just what should he do?

18. In what ways should parents be involved when a transition is being planned from a graded school to a nongraded school?

19. Is a nongraded school more expensive to operate? Does it take more money to finance it?

20. Do you need more materials—books, audiovisual materials, teaching machines, etc.—in a nongraded school?

21. What kind of physical facilities are needed for a nongraded school? Can you operate a good program in a traditional school building? Or do you need a school plant that is especially designed for the nongraded program?

22. What kind of preparation do teachers and principals need for working effectively in a nongraded school?

These questions, used as the basis for a recorded tape discussion, may also be useful to principals and teachers who wish to pursue a study of the nongraded school.

THE EDITOR